



# Council Member Handbook



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## **Chapter 1: City of River Falls, Wisconsin**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the exciting position as an elected official of the River Falls City Council. You will find that a leadership position in municipal government can be both rewarding and challenging. This handbook is created to assist in your transition to this position. It will provide an overview of River Falls and its government, as well as your primary responsibilities, and how elected and appointed officials as well as additional staff can work together in the most efficient and effective way to best serve the River Falls community. While the handbook is designed to answer many of the commonly asked questions of new Council members, it cannot begin to address all the topics and knowledge required for you to successfully fulfill your position. It is important that you develop relationships with both the elected and appointed officials of River and feel free to ask any questions you may have.

### **RIVER FALLS' FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

The City of River Falls is a municipal corporation with authority vested in the City Council and the Mayor, who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the city. River Falls, like many other Wisconsin cities under the home-rule charter of Wisconsin, has the power to govern itself regarding local matters except where the State has specifically prohibited that power. Individual members of the governing body have no authority to make decisions on behalf of the city unless they have been given specific authority from the governing body as a whole.

The Mayor has the authority to perform executive responsibilities by monitoring the Administrator and various departments of the city government. The Mayor also serves as the policy leader, holds veto power, s/he is also the chief representative of the city with media relations, meetings, and presentations to other governmental units. The Mayor also is responsible for appointing most committee and commission positions within the city, with the approval of the Council ([Municipal Code 2.10.060](#)).

The Council has all the powers of the city that have not been specifically given to some other body or officer. The City Council has the management and control of city property, finances, highways, streets, utilities, and public service. The Council may carry its powers into effect by license, regulation, suppression, borrowing, taxation, special assessment, appropriation, imposition of forfeiture and other necessary or convenient means ([Municipal Code 2.04.020](#)).

The City Administrator serves as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the city. To provide a more efficient and effective government, a professional manager is responsible for the direction and coordination of all city employees. The Administrator is a direct report to the Mayor and Council.

### **RIVER FALLS AT A GLANCE**

The City of River Falls was first settled in 1848 by Joel Foster. It originally started as the village of Kinnickinnic as it sets on the Kinnickinnic River and the South Fork of the river. It was later changed to its present name, River Falls.

The city is split by two counties, St. Croix, and Pierce, and is home to approximately 16,618 residents and 5,410 college students. Around half of River Falls' residents commute to the St. Paul/Minneapolis region to work as the city is located 25-30 miles east of the Twin Cities. The City of River Falls is also home to the University of Wisconsin River Falls (UWRF) branch; an NCAA Division III institution that has been a staple for the River Falls community since 1874. In addition to UWRF, River Falls is also home to Chippewa Valley Technical College and the River Falls Public School District that consists of eight schools serving approximately 3,427 students.

Opportunities are endless in the city beginning with the Class I trout stream, Kinnickinnic River; golf courses, as well as local parks and a swimming pool and splash pad. The local library as well as the UWRF library provides the community with an abundance of cultural and educational opportunities. In addition to the services provided by the city, other services, such as garbage and recycling, are contracted out to private contracting companies.

### **BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

- [Board of Appeals](#): Board meets as needed.
- [Board of Review](#): Meets annually.
- [Extraterritorial Zoning Board of Appeals](#): Three-member board (three members per township) meets as needed.
- [Extraterritorial Zoning Committee](#): Three-member committee meets as needed.
- [Historic Preservation Commission](#): Six-member commission and one Council representative meets on the second Wednesday every month at 5:30 p.m.
- [Library Board](#): Seven-member board and one Council representative, River Falls Superintendent of Schools or designee meets on the first Monday every month 6:30 p.m.
- [Parks and Recreation Advisory Board](#): Six-member board and one Council representative meets on the third Wednesday every month at 5:15 p.m.
- [Plan Commission](#): Four-member commission, the Mayor, Park and Recreation Chair, and one Council representative meets on the first Tuesday every month at 6:30 p.m.
- [Police and Fire Commission](#): Five-member commission meets as needed.
- [River Falls Housing Authority](#): Four-member and one Council representative meet on the second Wednesday every month at 6:30 p.m.
- [Utility Advisory Board](#): Six-member commission and one Council representative meets on the third Monday every month at 6:30 p.m.

### **PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR AT A GLANCE**

- City Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.
- Historic Preservation Commission: second Wednesday every month
- River Falls Library Board of Trustees: first Monday every month
- Park and Recreation Advisory Board: third Wednesday every month
- Plan Commission: first Tuesday every month
- Police and Fire Commission: As needed
- River Falls Housing Authority: second Tuesday every month

- Utility Advisory Board: third Monday every month
- Other Committees: Meet as needed

## **CITY DEPARTMENTS**

City Administrator  
City Clerk  
Community Development  
Engineering  
Finance  
Fire  
Human Resources  
Information Technology  
Municipal Court  
Municipal Utilities (Electric/Water/Sewer)  
Parks and Recreation  
Police  
Public Works

## **CITY VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES**

### Our Vision

A distinct, vibrant, and safe community with an abundance of nature and easy access to metropolitan amenities. A place where families, students and businesses flourish.

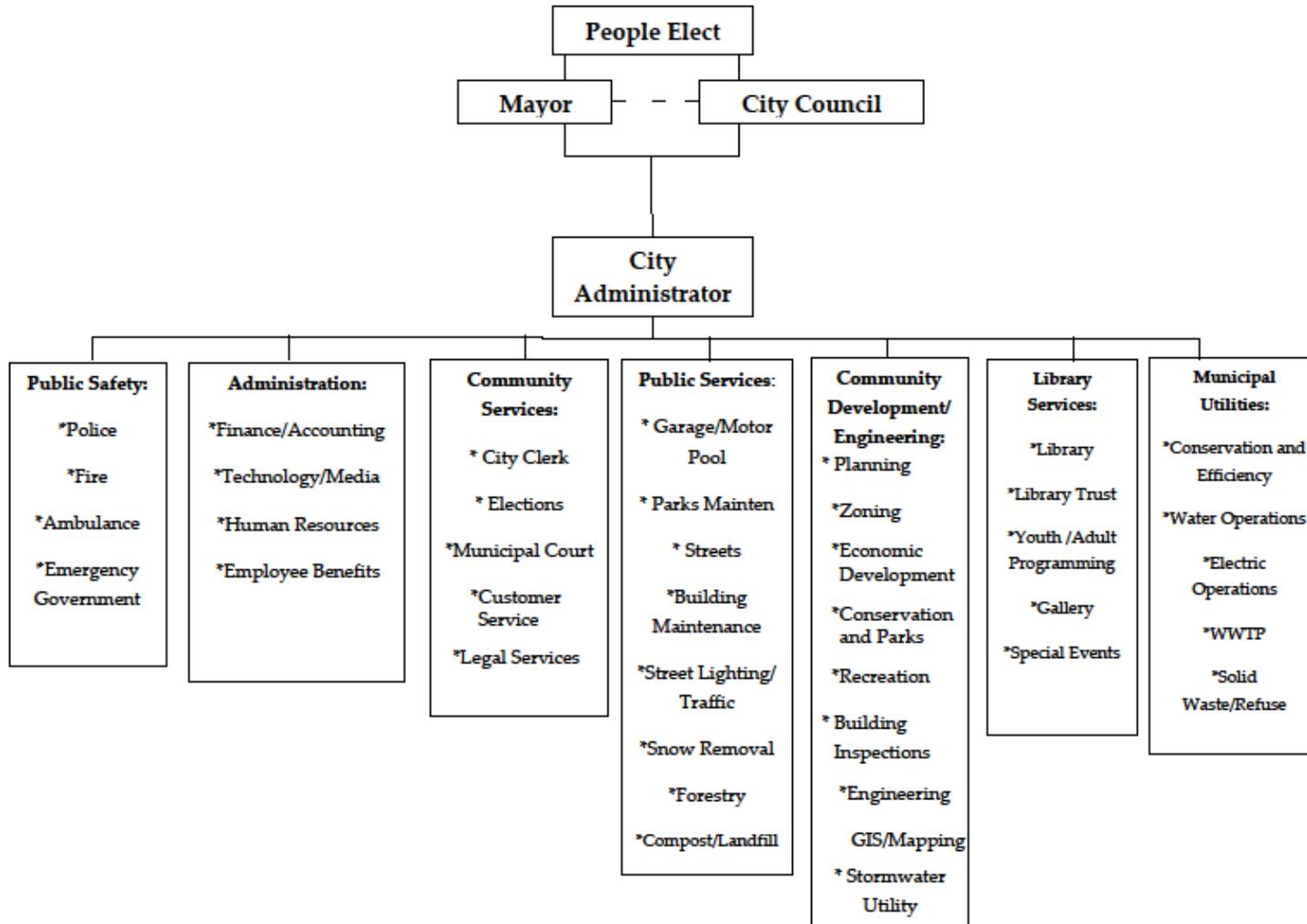
### Our Mission

To coordinate and deliver essential services and ensure a sustainable future.

### Our Values

Put People First  
Pursue Excellence  
Act with Integrity  
Embrace Change  
Serve our Community  
Consider Future Generations

## River Falls Functional Organizational Chart



## Chapter 2: Policies and Practices

Much of the responsibility of serving as an elected official lies in learning exactly what is expected of you. This chapter defines the primary duties associated with elected positions and provides a detailed guide to some of the most basic operations you will encounter.

In addition, you should familiarize yourself with [City of River Falls Common Council Bylaws](#). These bylaws provide clarity and summarize city ordinances and policies or guide the operations of the City Council in matters not otherwise covered by State Law, city ordinance or elsewhere. State law, City Code, or specific policies will supersede these bylaws in the event of conflicting language.

### **ROLE OF MAYOR [Municipal Code 2.08.080](#)**

- A. Duties: The Mayor shall perform the following duties as part of the base salary of the office.
1. The Mayor shall serve as the chief executive officer of the city, performing executive responsibilities by monitoring the activities of the administrator and various departments of city government to see that city ordinances and state laws are enforced. This will require knowledge of city ordinances and state laws and a procedure for monitoring municipal activities.
  2. The Mayor shall serve as the policy leader for the community, providing policy information and recommendations to the Council.
  3. The Mayor shall preside over the City Council.
  4. The Mayor shall vote in the event of a tie vote by the Council.
  5. The Mayor shall have the authority to veto ordinances passed by the Council.
  6. The Mayor shall serve as the chief representative of the city in relations with the media.
  7. The Mayor shall represent the city in meetings with and presentations to other governmental units, businesses, community groups, and other groups.
  8. The Mayor shall work with residents of the community in receiving their comments and complaints and seeking appropriate responses in conjunction with the administrator and, if necessary, the Council.
  9. The Mayor shall serve on standing and special committees of the city as well as on boards and commissions to which he/she is appointed or elected in accord with the law.
  10. The Mayor shall perform any other duties not specified here that are defined in other ordinances of the city.

B. Description of the Duties of the Mayor.

1. The Mayor is the chief executive officer of the city. In this role, the Mayor is responsible for the general welfare of the city. This responsibility is exercised in both a policy-making role by recommending policies to the Council, breaking tie votes, and vetoing legislation, and an executive role by seeing that laws are enforced, and that city officers and employees properly do their jobs.
2. These responsibilities are mandated by [State Statute \(Chapter 62.09\(8\)\)](#) and consequently apply to Mayors in municipalities with and without administrators. The difference is in the manner that the Mayor exercises his or her executive responsibility.
3. In municipalities with administrators, the Mayor exercises the executive responsibility indirectly by monitoring the activities of the administrator and the various departments of city government. The administrator is responsible for day-to-day operations of government, including the supervision of department heads ([Municipal Code 2.10.060](#)).

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Powers and Duties - The alderpersons and Mayor shall constitute the City Council and shall have such powers and duties as are enumerated in [Ch. 62, Wis. Stats.](#), and elsewhere in the statutes.

Authority - The City Council shall have all powers of the city not specifically given to some other body or officer. Except as otherwise provided by law, the City Council shall have the management and control of the city property, finances, highways, streets, utilities and the public service, and may act for the government and good order of the city, for its commercial benefit and for the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the public, and may carry its powers into effect by license, regulation, suppression, borrowing, taxation, special assessment, appropriation, imposition of forfeiture and other necessary or convenient means. The City Council may appoint such officers from time to time as may be deemed necessary for the benefit of the community. The powers hereby conferred shall be in addition to all other grants and shall be limited only by express language.

Alderspersons

- A. There shall be seven alderpersons elected to the City Council, one member from each of the four aldermanic districts and three members elected at large.
- B. Alderspersons shall be elected from Districts 1, 2 and 3 in odd-numbered years, along with one (1) at-large alderperson. District 4 and two at-large alderpersons shall be elected in the even-numbered years. Each alderperson so elected shall serve for two years and may be re-elected thereafter for any number of additional terms as the voters of the city or applicable district may choose ([Municipal Code 2.04.010 – 2.04.030](#)).

## **COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The City Council and City Administrator meet to create a [Strategic Plan](#). The plan identifies the priorities of the City Council into the strategic priorities as follows:

1. Connected Community
2. Economic Vitality
3. Financial Sustainability
4. Quality Municipal Services

The city's [2023-2025 Strategic Initiatives](#) are driven by the Strategic Plan and aligns with the Strategic Plan goals and supports the strategic initiatives and key outcome indicators. Beginning in 2013, the city has partnered with the National Research Center to conduct a comprehensive [citizen survey](#) every two years. The survey tracks residents' opinions of municipal services and community livability and provides important feedback for the city's future strategic planning.

## **AGENDAS AND MINUTES**

Council meeting agendas and the supporting materials are an important element in preparing for a Council meeting. City staff will work with the Mayor to compile the agenda, gathering all pertinent information that should be addressed by Council. It is important that Council members notify staff of any topics that they would like to be included on the agenda. Decisions may only be made at public meeting regarding items listed on the agenda.

Staff is responsible for originating the agenda and supporting documents. The [Council Agenda and Packet](#) are compiled electronically and posted to the city's website on the Thursday prior to a Council meeting. At that time, the agenda will also be posted at City Hall. It is required by Wisconsin State Law that an agenda be posted at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to a public meeting.

An important part of your role as a member of the Council is to review agenda materials prior to the Council meeting so that you are adequately informed of the topics to be discussed and can ask questions prior to the meeting and make decisions in an educated manner.

Following each Council meeting, staff will compose the minutes from that meeting. The minutes are a summary to record attendees and document important decisions that took place at the meeting. At the beginning of each Council meeting, you will be asked to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

## **PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES**

More information regarding the protocol for Council procedures can be found in [Chapter 2 of the City Code](#).

### ***Quorums and Open Public Meetings***

It is important that a quorum, or minimum number of four Council members, is present at any meeting so that votes can take place. Additionally, for some issues such as annexations or budget matters, a certain number of Council members need to be present to vote on the items. Any

decision made by Council with fewer than four or the required number of members present is not considered valid. It is also important to understand that any time more than two members of Council are together; a meeting of the Council is technically taking place. All meetings of the Council must be open and public, no matter where or when they are held, and all their proceedings must be recorded.

### ***Attendance at Meetings***

A member of the City Council may submit by email 24 hours in advance of the meeting a request to the City Clerk to participate in the meeting remotely, by video or audio-conferencing system.

Less than a 24-hour notice will be considered if extenuating circumstances exist, or emergency situations arise that can't be planned for in advance. Staff will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate this request.

Remote participation may be permitted in cases where the member would not otherwise be able to attend the meeting due to circumstances beyond the member's control where in-person attendance would create an undue hardship.

If one or more members of the city council participates remotely, the following shall occur:

1. The remote appearance shall be noted in the meeting minutes. The meeting must occur in a meeting room where the physically absent member(s) can hear and be heard by all those who are present.
2. If member(s) appearing remotely belong to the city council, they shall retain full participation and voting rights and count towards the quorum.
3. All voting during the meeting shall be conducted by roll call vote.
4. If at any time during the meeting one or more of the elements of the software allowing the remote participation malfunctions, compromising audio and/or video quality, the presiding officer shall call a recess until such time as communication is reestablished. If communication is not restored within 5 minutes, the presiding officer may entertain a motion to continue the meeting in absence of the remotely participating member(s). If the meeting continues without the remotely participating member(s) and there is a loss of a quorum, the meeting shall adjourn.

### ***Types of Council Meetings***

In addition to the regularly scheduled Council meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays, special meetings and/or workshops may be held to address certain topics. Both can be scheduled, when necessary, but public notice is to be made similarly to that required for a regular meeting. Typically, workshops are opportunities for staff to report to the Council on certain issues and/or items; formal decisions are not normally made during workshops.

### ***Order of Business***

The business of the Council shall be conducted substantially in the following order. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the ordinances, the Council meetings shall

commence at such time as the Council may from time to time establish by resolution provided all meetings are noticed according to statute ([Municipal Code 2.04.070](#)).

1. Call regular Council meeting to order
2. Roll call
3. Approval of minutes
4. Approval of city bills
5. Petitions, requests, and communications
6. Public hearings
7. Consent agenda
8. Ordinances and resolutions
9. Reports of officers, boards, and commissions
10. Unfinished business
11. New business
12. Announcements
13. Adjournment

### ***Approval Methods***

There are several ways in which the Council can make decisions during a public meeting. The subject of discussion determines which method should be used.

**Formal Motions** are used to approve policy, establish procedures, or provide direction to staff members relating only to topics listed on the agenda. Council members may make a motion by stating, "I move that..." Most formal motions need to be "seconded." This is done when an alderperson other than the one who made the motion states, "I second that motion," or "second."

A motion can be amended or withdrawn during discussion by the alderperson that originally made the motion. Before moving on to a new topic, the current topic must be closed in one of three ways: 1) The original author of the motion may withdraw his motion at any time during the discussion. 2) The motion may be "tabled." Tabling a motion is a procedural act (see below) that requires a Council vote. A tabled item can be brought back into debate with a motion to remove it from the table. 3) The Council can take a vote on the motion. See the discussion below on voting procedures.

**Procedural Motions** are made to determine the proceedings of a meeting. They, like formal motions, require a "second" and can order the adjournment of a meeting, the tabling a motion for later discussion, a temporary recess, or several other procedural events. The generally

accepted guide to meeting procedures is the book *Robert's Rules of Order*, which further explains procedural motions and other rules of public meetings.

**Council Voting** is required to finalize the opinions of the Council. Generally, a roll call vote on a formal or procedural motion can take place under one of two conditions. First, the Mayor may call for a vote regarding a motion when it is clear that debate has stopped. Second, during debate, a Council member may call for a vote on an open item by making a motion to vote on the measure on the floor. If this motion is seconded, then the Council takes a vote *on whether to vote on the original motion*. If a majority votes “yes,” THEN the main motion (with any accepted amendments) can be voted upon.

The process of making motions and voting can be a bit confusing at first, but over time, you will become more familiar with the process. If you are ever confused as to the action being requested in a motion or vote, take the time to ask the Mayor to explain what is taking place.

### **Lawmaking**

Final decisions of the Council are conveyed to the public through the adoption of ordinances and resolutions.

### **ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Every ordinance shall be presented in writing and shall receive two public readings before the Council prior to passage. Reading of the title shall be sufficient unless full reading is demanded by any member of the Council present, in which case a full reading shall be given. Each member of the Council shall be furnished with a copy of the proposed ordinance at or before its first reading.
2. Following the first reading of a proposed ordinance, a time and place shall be set when and where such ordinance shall be given its second reading, a public hearing and be considered for final passage. A notice shall be published at least once in the official newspaper of the city containing a summary of the proposed ordinance together with a notification of the time and place the ordinance will be given a public hearing and be considered for final passage. Such published notice shall appear no less than forty-eight hours nor more than ten calendar days prior to the time and place set for the public hearing and reading.
3. At the time and place set in the notice, all persons interested shall be given an opportunity to be heard. After such final reading and hearing, the Council may pass the ordinance with or without amendment, except that if it makes an amendment which constitutes a substantive change it shall not finally pass upon the ordinance until it has caused a like notice to be published at least once with a summary of the proposed amendment and the time and place when and where such amended ordinance shall be further considered.
4. Every ordinance shall be filed with the City Clerk at or before the time of its first reading and shall remain on file, open to public inspection until its final passage or rejection by the

Council, and if passed, it shall become and remain a part of the permanent files of the city ([Municipal Code 2.04.140](#)).

## **RESOLUTION REQUIREMENTS**

1. Every resolution shall be presented in writing and shall be read in full before a vote is taken thereon unless the reading of the resolution is dispensed with by unanimous consent. All other motions shall be stated in full by the presiding officer before they are submitted to the vote of the Council. Motions shall be recorded in full in the minutes of the Council meeting except that where a resolution has been formally introduced in writing, it may be referred to by title only and provided that the resolution be numbered and filed in the clerk's office as part of the permanent records of the city.
2. Petitions addressed to the Council shall be in writing and be read in full upon presentation. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit citizens from appearing before the Council and, should they be recognized by the presiding officer, allowed to present their petitions or communications directly to the Council ([Municipal Code 2.04.150](#)).

### ***Closed Sessions***

Closed sessions of the Council may only be held for a select number of reasons as set forth in [Section 19.85 of the Wisconsin State Statutes](#). While the public is prohibited from attending these sessions, notice must still be made of their existence. Closed meetings are only allowed to discuss personnel matters, litigation, or for some strategic reasons (such as when the discussion of purchase of a piece of real estate could be reasonably expected to increase the price the governmental body would have to pay for that property). Either part or all a Council meeting may be closed to the public.

### ***Abstaining from a Vote***

Every Council member should vote on all matters. However, a member has the right to abstain from voting whenever s/he so desires. S/he should also abstain from voting whenever there is a conflict of interest.

### ***Tie Votes***

In the event of a tie vote, the Mayor will cast the deciding vote.

### ***Consent Agenda***

A consent agenda is a practice by which the mundane and non-controversial board action items are organized apart from the rest of the agenda and approved as a group. Council members may pull any item from the consent agenda if they wish it to be separately considered.

### ***The Public's Role in the Meeting***

It is important that the public play an active role in the legislative process. During Council meetings, they have several opportunities to do so.

**Public Hearing-** Hearings are held on matters required by law or ordinance, such as adoption of the annual budget and amending the zoning ordinance. They may be held as standalone meetings, or a part of a regularly scheduled Council meeting. Public hearings are opportunities to inform the public and for any individual to speak on the topic while the hearing is open. Once the public hearing is closed, the public will no longer be able to comment on the topic during the meeting unless approved to do so by the Mayor.

**Public Comments from Citizens-** This is the public's opportunity to address the City Council on any item not listed on the agenda. The Council cannot act on any matter not listed on the agenda for the meeting. Topics may, however, be placed on future agendas for Council action. Particularly if multiple individuals wish to speak regarding the same topic, the Mayor may request that comments be limited to a particular time limit, which s/he shall determine.

## **ETHICS**

As elected public officials, it is required that you act in an independent and impartial way that is responsible to the people that elected you. To protect these values and so that the public may maintain confidence in the integrity of its government, the city has adopted a Code of Ethics for all elected and appointed employees, including Council, staff, and members of boards and committees. The Code of Ethics, which can be found in [Chapter 2.28 of the City Code](#), is meant to establish guidelines for ethical conduct for all officials and employees and to define what the "best interests of the City of River Falls" are. Ethical conduct is an extremely important part of your role as a representative of the city, and the code should be read carefully and referred to often during your tenure as a Council member.

In addition to those guidelines set forth by the city's Code of Ethics, several State of Wisconsin statutes define the way publicly elected officials should act. [Section 19.59, the State Ethics Law for Local Government Officials, Employees, and Candidates](#) is attached at the end of this handbook ([Appendix C](#)) and should also be carefully reviewed. Generally, they prohibit using your office for private gain, exerting illegal influence, and acting in a matter that you have invested interest in.

If you have a question about ethics, you may contact the City Attorney or City Administrator.

## **OTHER POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS:**

### ***Paychecks***

Each alderperson shall receive a base salary of \$6,000 and the Mayor shall receive a base salary of \$12,000 annually. The checks are dispersed on the on the second payroll period each month.

### ***Opportunity for Training and Outside Meetings***

The city will pay for training and outside meeting opportunities that will help you accomplish your goals as a member of the City Council. One of many sources of this training is the League of

Wisconsin Municipalities. The per diem shall not exceed \$125 per day and shall be calculated upon the basis of an eight-hour day. "Per diem" means, for purposes of this section, the payment of a stipend to members of the common Council and Mayor for attendance at conventions, conferences or other educational or training sessions deemed to be of value to the city, each time and every event, as well as a payment to members of the common Council or to the Mayor in compensation to them for attendance at common Council meetings other than regularly scheduled common Council meetings which, because of their timing, take an alderperson or the Mayor away from their employment and to include travel time that requires losing employment time. For each hour spent on a given day in pre-approved training, the Mayor and alderpersons shall be eligible for a per diem of \$15.63. If the Mayor or a member of the common Council wish to engage in training on the city's behalf that alderperson or the Mayor shall seek and must obtain prior approval from the common Council to qualify said training for a per diem. In addition, each alderperson and the Mayor shall, in exchange for the city's willingness to compensate them in this fashion, shall provide the common Council with an oral and written presentation at the next regular common Council meeting on the education or training which he or she received at the convention, conference or educational or training session in question.

### ***Vacancies in Municipal Office***

Vacancies in elected or appointed offices can be caused by death, removal, resignation, if the individual ceases to be a resident of the City of River Falls, when an individual's term expires, or when an individual is convicted and sentenced by a state or federal court for treason, felony or other crime of any nature punishable by imprisonment in any jail or prison for one year or more, or for any offense involving a violation of the incumbent's official oath.

Resignations must be made in writing and delivered to the City Clerk, who is responsible for informing other Council members and the Mayor. The effective date of resignation should be included in the letter.

Vacancies in the office of Mayor or alderperson are to be filled by appointment of the Council, and that person is to serve until a successor is elected and qualified. If the vacancy occurs on or before December 1 and the term does not expire the following April, a successor must be chosen at the spring election. If the vacancy occurs after December 1 proceeding the first Tuesday in April, then the election is held in April of the second year following the December 1 cutoff date.

## Chapter 3: Staff

While the City Council, boards, and committees of River Falls make most policy decisions and guide the actions of staff members, those staff members take on the responsibility of implementing decisions of the Council. It is important that the Council understands and respects the role staff plays and that an open line of communication exists between all parties.

### **STAFFING HIGHLIGHTS:**

The city employs approximately 120+ people in several different departments ranging from Mayor, City Administrator, to Mechanics and Library Aides in addition to several volunteer, seasonal, and contract positions.

### **ROLE OF CITY ADMINISTRATOR [Municipal Code 2.10.040](#)**

The Administrator, subject to the limitations defined in resolutions and ordinances of the city and Wisconsin State Statutes, shall be the chief administrative officer of the city, responsible only to the Mayor and the Council for the proper administration of the business affairs of the city, pursuant to the Statutes of the state of Wisconsin, the ordinances of the city, and the resolutions and directives of the Council, with power and duties as follows:

#### A. General duties:

1. To carry out directives of the Mayor and Council which require administrative implementation, reporting promptly to the Mayor and Council any difficulties encountered herein
2. Be responsible for the administration of all day-to-day operations of the city government including the monitoring of all city ordinances, resolutions, Council meeting minutes and State Statutes
3. Prepare a plan of administration, including an organization chart which defines authority and responsibility for all non-statutory positions of the city, and submit it to the City Council for adoption as the official organization and administrative procedure plan for the city
4. Establish when necessary administrative procedures to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of city government according to current practices in local government not inconsistent with subsection A.3. of this section or directives of the Mayor and Council
5. Serve as ex-officio non-voting member of all boards, commissions, and committees of the city, except as specified by the Council or Wisconsin State Statutes
6. Keep informed concerning federal, state and county legislation and administrative rules affecting the city and submit appropriate reports and recommendations thereon to the Council

7. Keep informed concerning the availability of federal, state, and county funds for local programs. Assist department heads and the Council in obtaining these funds under the direction of the Mayor and the Council
8. Represent the city in matters involving legislative and intergovernmental affairs as authorized and directed as to that representation by the Mayor and Council
9. Act as public information officer for the city with the responsibility of assuring that the news media are kept informed about the operations of the city and that all open meeting rules and regulations are followed
10. Establish and maintain procedures to facilitate communications between citizens and city government to assure that complaints, grievances, recommendations, and other matters receive prompt attention by the responsible official, and to assure that all such matters are expeditiously resolved
11. Promote the economic well-being and growth of the city through public and private sector cooperation

B. Responsibilities to the City Council:

1. Attend all meetings of the Council assisting the Mayor and the Council as required in the performance of their duties
2. In coordination with the Mayor, the Council, and the Clerk, ensure that appropriate agendas are prepared to all meetings of the Council, all Council committees, and all other appropriate committees and commissions of the city, together with such supporting material as may be required, with nothing herein being construed as to give the administrator authority to limit or in any way prevent matters from being considered by the Council, or any of its committees and commissions
3. Assist in the preparation of ordinances and resolutions as requested by the Mayor or the Council, or as needed
4. Keep the Mayor and Council regularly informed about the activities of the administrator's office by oral or written report at regular and special meetings of the Council
5. If action normally requiring Council approval is necessarily at a time when the Council cannot meet, the administrator shall receive directives from the Mayor

C. Personnel:

1. Be responsible for the administrative direction and coordination of all employees of the city according to the established organization procedures

2. Recommend to the Council the appointment, promotion, and when necessary for the good of the city, the suspension or termination of department heads
3. In consultation with the appropriate department head, be responsible for the appointment, promotion, and when necessary for the good of the city, the suspension or termination of employees below the department head level
4. Serve as personnel officer for the city with responsibilities to see that complete and current personnel records, including specific job descriptions, for all city employees are kept; evaluate in conjunction with department heads the performance of all employees on a regular basis; recommend salary and wage scales for city employees not covered by collective bargaining agreements; develop and enforce high standards of performance by city employees; assure that city employees have proper working conditions; work closely with department heads to promptly resolve personnel problems or grievances
5. Assist in labor contract negotiations and collective bargaining issues
6. Work closely with department heads to assure that employees receive adequate opportunities for training to maintain and improve their job-related knowledge and skills and act as the approving authority for requests by employees to attend conferences, meetings, training schools, etc., if funds have been budgeted for these activities.

D. Budgeting and purchasing:

1. Subject to the directives of the Mayor and common Council, be responsible for the preparation of the annual city budget in accordance with guidelines as may be provided by the common Council and its coordination with department heads and pursuant to state statutes, for review and approval by the Mayor and the Council
2. Administer the budget as adopted by the Council
3. Report regularly to the Council on the current fiscal position of the city
4. Supervise the finance officer, whose direct responsibility it shall be to implement the accounting system of the city. It shall be the duty of the administrator to ensure that the system employs methods in accordance with current and professionally and municipally accepted accounting practices
5. Other duties; changes in duties: The administrator shall perform such other and further duties and responsibilities as are assigned to the office from time to time by the common Council or Mayor. In addition, the common Council shall prepare a job description which conforms with this ordinance; however, it reserves the right to alter

said job description from time to time, both in terms of adding to or taking away job duties from said office ([Municipal Code 2.10.040](#)).

### **ROLE OF CITY ATTORNEY [Municipal Code 2.08.160](#)**

The City Attorney shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Council, on an annual basis. The Attorney's duties include attending all Council meetings, providing legal advisement to City Council and staff, representing the city in all court cases, and assisting in drafting and reviewing proposed ordinances.

### **ROLE OF CITY CLERK AND CITY TREASURER (Finance Director) [Municipal Code 2.08.090](#) and [2.08.100](#)**

The City Clerk and City Treasurer are appointed by the Council. The City Clerk shall have the powers and duties provided by [Section 62.09\(11\), Wis. Stats.](#), and such other duties as may be adopted in the form of a job description. The Finance Director shall have the powers and duties provided by [Section 62.09\(9\), Wis. Stats.](#), and such other duties as may be adopted in the form of a job description.

### **OTHER KEY POSITIONS, STAFF, AND CONTRACTING AGENCIES**

#### ***Division Heads***

Working under the direction of the City Administrator, division heads lead staff in carrying out the directives of the Mayor and Council and daily administrative functions. They assist the city Administrator in the hiring process for employees in their departments. Division heads include the Finance Director, Community Development Director, Fire Chief, Library Director, Human Resources Director, Community Services Director/Clerk, Police Chief, and Utility Director. Although the Fire Department is staffed primarily by volunteers, it is a city department.

#### ***Other Key Staff***

City Council appoints the City Assessor on an annual basis. The Assessor is responsible for assessing and reassessing the value of land and property located within city limits.

### **EXISTING BARGAINING UNITS**

**Police Department Employees' Association** – this union is the bargaining agent for all full-time sworn police officers in the city. The Police Chief and Sergeants are excluded.

Note: [2011 Wisconsin Act 10](#) significantly altered the city's relationship with bargaining units. For more information on the current labor/management environment, see the City Administrator or Human Resources Director.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF MEMBERS**

While City Council is responsible for determining the policy of the city and providing direction for staff action, the City Administrator is the Chief Administrative Officer for the city. Though Council requests and direction play an important role in determining employees' work plans, it is important

the City Administrator be able to coordinate and monitor work efforts of all staff members. For this reason, Council requests for staff action and task assignments should be conveyed to the City Administrator except in cases of emergency. In this way, Council requests will be fulfilled while the Administrator maintains his advisory position with staff. This distinction is important as Council members may not be aware of the most appropriate staff member to direct requests towards or the current workload of individual employees. It helps in making sure that efficiency and order are maintained in city operations.

Similarly, Council should communicate with the City Administrator any concerns about individual employees before directly addressing problems with the employee. In this way, Council can maintain an active role in municipal government while allowing the proper chain of command to remain intact.

## **Chapter 4: Finance**

The budget acts as a policy tool with which to identify the community's priorities and can function as a work plan for the upcoming year. This chapter is a good starting point and will offer you the basic knowledge to ask intelligent questions regarding the budget process. You should review the current budget and any other financial plans as you learn about your role as an alderperson and use these documents in your decision-making process. The Finance Director is the individual primarily responsible for the city's accounting procedures. The City Administrator is charged with presenting a budget to the Council. A member of the City Council is appointed at the reorganization meeting in April to service as comptroller.

The City Administrator and Finance Director work together to present a recommended budget to the Council in September/October. The Council is then responsible for holding a public hearing, making any desired changes, and ultimately approving the budget and tax levy for the coming year.

### **FINANCIAL POLICIES**

#### ***State-Mandated Policies***

The State of Wisconsin imposes many requirements for preparing the annual budget and managing the finances of the city. For instance, the State requires that an annual budget be created listing all revenues and expenditures, that the public hearing notice include certain information, and that the public hearings are held regarding the proposed budget. The city's fiscal year begins on January 1.

#### ***Municipally Adopted Policies***

The city has also adopted several policies regarding financial management. Some of these can be found in [Chapter 3 of the City Code](#). Among other policies, the chapter defines the city's Purchasing Policy ([Section 3.12](#)) and the process for payment of monthly bills and payroll. At each monthly Council meeting, the Comptroller will present to the Council for approval a report identifying all the bills, accounts, and claims recommended for payment. In addition, an independent auditor conducts an [annual audit](#) of city finances every year. City staff also rely on

industry best practices to guide financial decisions when policies are not already established by the State or Council. In 2016, the city implemented a [Debt Management Policy](#) and [Fund Balance Policy](#) to provide future financial guidance.

In 2014, the City of River Falls adopted its first two-year budget for Fiscal Years 2015-2016. A two-year budget allows staff to plan and set goals for the two-year period under the direction of the City Council. In addition, it reduces the staff time spent on the budgeting process and allows staff to focus on service delivery and improving city operations. Two-year budgeting empowers departments with more flexibility to manage their revenues and costs. Occasionally, the Finance Director, City Administrator, or auditors may recommend additional financial management policies be reviewed and approved.

## **FUND EXPLANATION**

The city's finances are divided into several separate fund types to facilitate proper management and use. Below is a basic description of each fund.

The **General Fund** accounts for all revenues and expenditures that are not required to be accounted for in other funds. The General Fund includes major property-tax based services such as police, fire, and transportation.

**Special Revenue Funds** account for proceeds from revenue sources that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes. The Shared-Ride Taxi Fund, Library Funds, impact fee funds, tax increment funds, and Environmental Fee Utility Fund are all accounted for in the special revenue funds.

The **Debt Service Fund** is used to account for the annual principal and interest payments relating to the city's general obligation long-term debt.

The **Capital Projects Fund** accounts for the financial resources to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital assets.

**Enterprise Funds** account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner like a private business. The operations of the Electric, Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Utilities, and Ambulance services are accounted for in the city's enterprise funds.

**Internal Service Funds** are used to account for operating costs for the City Hall building. Revenue includes rent from the cable, stormwater and utility funds, and transfers from other funds for rent equivalent operating costs, and allocation of maintenance services.

## **REVENUE SOURCES: TAXES, LICENSE FEES, USER FEES**

A large percentage of the city's annual revenue comes from local taxes and from fees charged for services provided by the city. The property tax is levied on the value of real and personal property located in the city. Municipalities in Wisconsin have been granted very little authority to levy other types of taxes, such as sales or income tax.

The city also collects revenues through license and user fees. Fees are charged for city services such as the use of recreational facilities and the processing of building permits so that the users of those services are directly responsible for covering costs of providing the service.

## **HISTORY OF RIVER FALLS LEVY**

Over the past ten years, the Council has held the increases over that period to less than the increase in inflation over the same period. The city is continuing to follow the strategy outlined in the [2022-2026 Fiscal Plan](#), which is a path that provides long-term fiscal solvency to achieve the city's long-term goals.

## **ROLE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUES**

The most significant non-property tax revenue source in the annual budget is the amount received in intergovernmental appropriations, particularly from the State. Until 2002, these funds had been steadily increasing. Since 2002, they have been on a gradual decline. The following are revenues that the city receives annually from the State.

**State Shared Revenues** This includes the "Shared Revenue" program for general operating aid and the "Expenditure Restraint" program that rewards communities for fiscal restraint of the general fund.

The State reallocates money collected through the personal income tax back to municipalities through the Shared Revenue program. Revenue is distributed among municipalities using a formula that consists of four components:

- 1) *Aid able Revenue Component*: This component of the formula aims to offset variances in taxable property wealth across the state.
- 2) *Per Capita Component*: This component is more broad-based and is allocated based on population.
- 3) *Public Utility Component*: This component provides payments to replace property tax revenues lost because utilities are exempt from property taxation.
- 4) *Minimum Guarantee and Maximum Growth Component*: This component is designed to prevent large annual shifts in payments.

**Transportation Aid** This program allocates State revenue to the city to offset the city's related street expenditures.

Aids for Municipal Services the city receives formula-based annual payments from the State of Wisconsin for police, fire and refuse services provided to state-owned properties, including the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

## **TAX INCREMENT DISTRICTS (TIDs)**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool that helps promote local tax base expansion by using property tax revenues to fund site improvements to attract new development

or eliminate blight. A TID (Tax Incremental District) is the actual area designated for expansions and where improvements are being made. Owners of property in a TID pay the same rate of taxes that owners outside the TID pay. TID is neither a tax freeze nor a tax increase, but a special allocation method for taxes collected on property value increases within the district.

Property tax rates for the school, county, technical college, and municipality are based on the total taxable value of the property located in the TID at the time it is created (base year). Those organizations continue to receive this amount of property tax revenue during the life of the TID. As the value of the property increases due to development, the additional property tax revenue created is allocated to the municipality for a set number of years. Development costs are paid from these revenues before the added tax base is shared with other taxing entities.

Upon City Council approval, an exemption from or a reduction in the amount of park impact fees on development located within a tax incremental district may be made. As set forth in Section 66.0617(7), Wisconsin Statutes, no amount of an impact fee for which an exemption or reduction is provided under this subsection may be shifted to any other development in the land development in which a tax incremental district is located or to any other land development in the city. Any claim for exemption must be made no later than the time of application for a building permit.

The City of River Falls currently has the following Tax Increment Districts (TIDs):

TID #5 includes Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park. The expenditure period ended 2016; the district termination date is 2027.

TID #6 includes downtown hotel and surrounding area. The expenditure period ends 2027; district termination date is 2032.

TID #7 includes Frisbie Development; the expenditure period ends 2024; district termination date is 2029.

TID #8 includes Gerrard Development (former Foster Court) called University Place. The expenditure period ends 2032; district termination date is 2037.

TID #9 includes Nash Finch Redevelopment of Family Fresh and the former Lund's Hardware property. The expenditure period ends 2033; district termination date is 2038.

TID #10 is the Sterling Ponds Corporate Park. The expenditure period ends 2029; district termination date is 2035.

TID #11 encompasses approximately 26 acres in the River Falls Industrial Park. The expenditure period ends 2030. The district termination date is 2035.

TID #12 encompasses approximately 5.62 acres in the Mann Valley Industrial Park. The expenditure period ends 2031. The district termination date is 2036.

TID #13 is 93.16 acres in the Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park. The expenditure period ends 2033. The district termination date is 2038.

TID #14 is 4.51 acres north of City Hall. The expenditure period ends 2040. The district termination date is 2045.

TID #15 is 1.6 acres on South Main Street. The expenditure period ends 2042. The district termination date is 2047.

TID #16 is 94.7 acres near DeSanctis Park. The expenditure period ends 2035. The district termination date is 2040.

TID #17 is 11.78 acres off STH 35. The expenditure period ends 2043. The district termination date is 2049.

TID #18 is 3.24 acres on South Main Street. The expenditure period ends 2043. The district termination date is 2048.

TID #19 is 200+ acres on the northeast side of the city in the Mann Valley Corporate Park. The expenditure period ends 2045. The district termination date is 2050.

For more information on the city's efforts to promote economic vitality, visit to the [Doing Business](#) section of the city website.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)**

The city operates a [Capital Improvements Plan](#) (CIP) as a planning document to anticipate future large expenditures. It is a tool to chart both capital revenue (including bonds, grants, interest payments, and transfers from the General Fund) and expenditures. Capital items that are typically expected to cost more than \$5,000 or have a life of more than one year are placed in the CIP so that the city can plan for future funding needs and coordinate major construction and purchasing projects.

### **PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES**

*Utilities:* Capital assets for electric and water utilities are based on the current value of assets multiplied by the city mill rate.

*Housing Authority:* Makes an annual payment in lieu of tax payment based on revenue collected less utility costs.

## Chapter 5: Legal Issues

The [City Code](#) establishes local law which governs matters of local concern within the city and pertaining to its governance. In addition, the city is a creature of state law and statutes adopted by the State Legislature together with state administrative code also apply and to the extent that the legislature has determined that certain state enactments are to be of statewide concern or that the courts have concluded that state law has primacy even with respect to local affairs, state law prevails. Ordinances and applicable statutes not only govern the actions of natural and artificial person but the way the city and its elected and appointed officers and employees conduct business. Listed below are some of the more important legal topics of which you should be aware. However, it is important that you ask the City Administrator or City Attorney if you have questions on particular topics.

### **CITY OF RIVER FALLS' ORDINANCES**

The City's Code constitutes a set of permanent rules of order and regulation of conduct within the city. The Common Council is responsible for adopting, amending, and repealing ordinances to meet the best interests of the city. The City Code addresses many aspects of local government, including but not limited to appointment and empowerment of committees, boards, and commissions but also city finance and taxation procedures, traffic and health and welfare regulations, the public peace and order and the procedural and substantive frameworks for local licenses and permits, the operation of public utilities, establishment of zoning, subdivision and building codes and rules governing the conduct of business by the Common Council, committees, boards, commissions and officers and employees of the city.

### **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

All business transacted by the Common Council, its committees, commissions, and boards on behalf of the city must be undertaken during a duly posted meeting. All meetings shall be open to the public in locations which are accessible to those who are interested in attending. Public notice and other criteria pertaining to the holding of meetings and the transaction of business are governed by [Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law, Subch. V, Ch. 19, Wis. Stats.](#) To transact business, a quorum of a governmental body must be present. Closed sessions, from which the public is excluded, are the exception to open meetings and must be conducted strictly in accord with [State Statue 19.85, Wis. Stats.](#), and interpreting case law.

### **PUBLIC RECORDS**

Wisconsin law holds that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information about governmental affairs as well as pertaining to official acts undertaken by the officers and employees of a governmental body. Accordingly, [Wisconsin has adopted a Public Records Law, found at Subch. II, Ch. 19, Wis. Stats.](#), which defines and applies not only each of the physical forms of records subject to public review, but additionally, the type of records which may be accessed by the public. Interested persons may request access to and the making of copies of any public record without the necessity of expressing a reason; therefore, subject to certain exceptions. Questions pertaining to the application of the Public Records Law to a specific request for access should be referred to the City Clerk.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

State law and local ordinances define the proper course of action to take when there is or may be a conflict of interest on the part of an officer or employee. State and local ethics codes provide guidelines for dealing with questions concerning potential or actual conflicts of interest.

A Common Council member with a personal or financial interest in proposed action should disclose to the Council the nature of his or her interest prior to debate, or in some circumstances, before action is taken in the form of a vote. Because both elected and appointed officers and employees may influence the Common Council in matter in which he or she has a personal or financial interest, such interests should be disclosed to avoid either the appearance of or actual impropriety.

Sometimes, it is not clear whether a conflict of interest, as defined by law, is present. Even though it may be legal to act on a matter, it may give the appearance of impropriety to do so. Questions regarding conflict of interest can be directed to the City Attorney.

1. Financial and Personal Interest Prohibited. No official or employee, whether paid or unpaid, shall engage in any business or transaction, nor shall such official or employee act regarding financial or other personal interest, direct or indirect, when such actions are incompatible with the proper discharge of his or her official duties or when such actions impair his or her independence of judgment or action in the performance of his or her official duties.
2. Definitions.
  - a) "Financial interest" means any interest which shall yield, directly or indirectly, a monetary or other material benefit to the officer or employee or to any person employing or retaining the services of the officer or employee.
  - b) "Personal Interest" means any interest arising from blood or marital relationships or from business or political associations, whether any financial interest is involved.
  - c) "Person" means any person, corporation, partnership, or joint venture.
3. Specific Conflicts Enumerated.
  - a) Incompatible Employment. No official or employee shall engage in or accept private employment or render service for private interest when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of his or her official duties or would tend to impair his or her independence of judgment or action in the performance of his or her official duties, unless otherwise permitted by law and unless disclosure is made as herein provided.
  - b) Disclosure of Confidential Information. No official or employee shall disclose confidential information concerning the property, government or affairs of the city nor

shall he or she use such information to advance the financial or other private interest of himself or herself or other.

- c) Representing Private Interests Before City Agencies or Courts. No officer or employee shall appear on behalf of any private person, other than himself or herself, his or her spouse or minor children before any city agency or municipal court. However, a member of the Council may appear before city agencies on behalf of his or her constituents in the course of his or her duties as a representative of the electorate or in the performance of public or civic obligations ([Municipal Code 2.28.050](#)).

### **ACCEPTING GIFTS**

Neither officers nor employees of the city should accept gifts, favors, or hospitality where it could be expected that they may be offered to influence official actions or be considered as a reward for an official act, or which might impair the independence of your judgment. The City Attorney should be consulted if questions arise.

## Chapter 6: Land

### PLANNING AND ZONING

Planning and zoning are methods of achieving the orderly physical development of a community. Planning lays out the intended path of development for a city and is typically done through a formal comprehensive plan. The City Council, makes decisions regarding the planned development of public infrastructure in the city through the adoption of the [Comprehensive Plan](#), CIP, and other long-range plans, such as the [Historic Preservation Plan](#), [River Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#), [Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) and [Downtown Design Plan](#). In 2015, the City Council passed the [Glen and Hoffman Parks Master Plans](#), establishing long-term visions to ensure that the parks are suitable for the community, now and in the future. **Community Development also delivers a [Trends Report](#) to Council, which provides a statistical snapshot of changes in the City of River Falls throughout the previous calendar year.** You should consider the future needs of residents and businesses and how your current decisions will affect that future.

The city has adopted an extensive Zoning Ordinance ([Chapter 16 of the City Code](#)) to promote the health, safety, morals, prosperity, aesthetics, and general welfare of the community. This ordinance is the legal way to facilitate good development and aid long-range plans. It regulates use of land and structures, lot coverage, population distribution and density, and the size and location of structures to promote the safety of citizens and efficient use of public infrastructure. Zoning districts permit various uses, including residential, business, industry, and Planned Unit Development.

Property owners must apply for a zoning permit and pay any applicable fees whenever a change or update in zoning is requested. Their request for a zoning designation or change will first be brought before the Plan Commission, who will make a recommendation to the Council.

Owners must apply for a building permit and pay a fee when completing any construction or significant remodeling of property.

### ANNEXATION

Annexation is a way for cities to expand their borders. In some instances, cities may wish to annex neighboring land to reap its benefits, such as gaining additional land to build an industrial park on. In other cases, residents living outside city limits may request that they be annexed so that they may receive city services such as water and sewer. Below is a brief description of several ways in which annexation can take place. There are several methods to accomplish annexation, including: 1) direct annexation by unanimous approval, 2) direct annexation, 3) annexation by residents' referendum, 4) annexation of owned territory, and 5) annexation on city initiative by referendum and court order. The most used practice is the first. Further questions regarding annexation may be directed to the City Administrator or Attorney.

#### *Direct Annexation by Unanimous Approval*

If a single property owner or a group of property owners unanimously decide that they want their properties to be annexed by the city, they may provide a petition to the City Clerk that they

currently are part of, and the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The Council may adopt an annexation ordinance by a two-thirds vote.

### **VARIANCES**

Residents and business owners can apply for variances from the Zoning Ordinance when they desire to use land or buildings in a way that doesn't conform to the ordinance. This application is to be filed with the Zoning Administrator. The Board of Appeals will be responsible for granting a variance if the desired action is not considered harmful to the public interest and if a literal enforcement of the ordinance will result in unnecessary hardship to the property owner.

## Chapter 7: Resources

Ultimately, you are elected by the citizens, and are responsible solely to them. However, you may wish to consider the following advice.

### **EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY**

Because of the complex nature of municipal government, it can sometimes seem difficult to make decisions and act in an efficient and effective manner. It is important to work as both a leader and a team member in making decisions that affect the city. Keeping these suggestions in mind can help to ensure that each alderperson, as well as the Council as a whole, is able to efficiently accomplish their goals.

#### *Respect*

Each Council member and member of the public provides a unique perspective. It may be helpful, as you join the Council, for you to share with your colleagues your background and special interests, and to learn as much about theirs as you can. This mutual learning will assist in the development of both your professional and personal relationships. The best Council is one in which members have strong individual identities but work effectively as a team.

#### *Teamwork*

All Council members have a responsibility to represent a diverse community. Being able to pass any legislation requires that individuals are tolerant of other's viewpoints. Part of the democratic process is the difference in opinion of our representatives; it is ineffective, however, to allow that difference to halt the decision-making process. The art of compromise is very important in Council discussions, as it takes a majority vote to achieve anything. When facing opposition, try to understand the values that are driving the individual. Work for creative solutions that may or may not be the first choice of the parties involved but address the core needs and values of each party. Remember, all formal actions of the Council require at least four affirmative votes.

#### *Address Critical Issues*

While it is important as a Councilor to communicate with and address the needs of citizens, it is also important to keep those needs in perspective. Work to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the community.

#### *Alderspersons as Leaders*

As a Council member, you are asked to be a leader. While it is your job to represent your constituents, it is also your job to help them see the bigger picture. Sometimes, government issues are complicated and not easily understood by the public. During those times, you should work to help your constituents understand the issue. Occasionally, you may even need to take a leadership role contrary to the view of your constituents based on your position as an educated Councilor looking out for the best interests of the community.

## **Process vs. Product**

Council members must balance the value of public input in meetings with the value of decision making. Though it is important to allow public comment, drawn out or repetitive comments prolong Council discussion and may leave little time for productive discussion on items found later in the agenda.

## **Conflict Management**

Although certain topics may ignite personalities and anger both Council and members of the public, little is accomplished when there is a lack of courtesy for others. It is important that the Mayor maintain control of meetings and that Council not get drawn in by emotional members of the public.

## ***Personal Attacks***

Attacks on individuals, whether Council members, staff, or the public, are never appropriate. If an individual does or says something wrong, you should not hesitate to address it. Most often, however, the appropriate time and place to address problems is not during a public meeting. This includes addressing work product issues with staff.

## ***This Too Shall Pass***

During times of high conflict, it is sometimes hard not to take problems home or take them out on others. Keep in mind that these issues will fade and will be replaced by new ones. While it is your job to address difficult issues, it is understood that you will never be able to completely solve many of them. The key is to keep a positive perspective and work with the other members of your team.

## **INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC**

You have been elected by the public to represent the public. Both in formal meetings and daily life on the street, a large component of your job is to be attentive to their concerns. These are opportunities for you to inform them about what the government is doing and gather their opinion on matters that concern the city government.

[Chapter 2](#) addresses the public's role during Council meetings and public hearings. In addition to these circumstances, you will have the opportunity to interact with the public as you make public appearances and talk to individuals daily. At such appearances, you are representing the city. Those are opportunities for you to explain your position on issues, respond to citizen complaints, test new ideas, or ask for citizen involvement on a project. It is also important to keep in mind that what you say make influence what people will think about the city for years to come.

As a Councilor, you can expect many questions and complaints from the public. By answering honestly and being available to provide information whenever possible, you can make your life, as well as other city officials' and staff members', much easier. Often you will be able to answer a question or complaint yourself. If you need to pass the question on to another individual, follow up to make sure that that person adequately addressed the citizen's needs. When addressing

citizen requests for action, it is always appropriate to offer to investigate the situation personally or discuss with staff.

No matter what the issue, you should welcome all questions and/or complaints. They often provide valuable insights and help you to better represent citizens. While you may occasionally be inclined to dismiss some complaints, it is almost always in the city's best interest for you to remain attentive and professional when interacting with the public.

## **DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

Especially if considering a controversial decision, working with the media can be one of the most challenging aspects of your position as an alderperson. Expect media representatives to be present at most city functions. Keep in mind that it is their job to get the news that you are making to the rest of the community. Building a positive relationship with journalists can help you both to attain your goals.

Establishing good relations with local newspapers, radio stations, and TV channels is a big step toward these goals. By welcoming reporters and sharing relevant information with the media, you will be building a relationship that can benefit you when news coming from City Hall may be controversial. Whenever, possible, avoid using the phrase "no comment" or refusing to answer questions, as it breaks down Media-Council relationships and often pushes a reporter to look harder for Council faults. "I don't have the answer right now, but I can follow up and get back to you," is always an appropriate way to answer a question that you don't have the answer to now.

***Remember that you have specifically assigned the City Administrator the responsibility of your Public Information Officer. It is also appropriate to ask the media to contact the City Administrator for further information on any topic.***

Make sure that when you talk with reporters, they receive all the facts and fully understand the details of a situation. Sometimes, governmental procedures can be complex; the additional time that it takes to explain something is well worth it. If necessary, follow up with reporters. If you feel it is appropriate, volunteer to review an article before it goes to print to check its accuracy. Don't be afraid to contact them if there is an inaccuracy in information they provide to the public.

While working hard to build a positive relationship is important, sometimes reporters will not seem to be on your side. As professional news reporters, they will quote you however they hear you, regardless of what you intended to say. At other times, they will scrutinize your actions. It is important to remain patient and professional and remember that ultimately, they are also working to serve the public.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **League of Wisconsin Municipalities**

316 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 600

Madison, WI 53703

608-267-2380

[www.lwm-info.org](http://www.lwm-info.org)

The League is a voluntary not-for-profit association that works with local governments and provides legal resources, conference and networking opportunities, educational handbooks and publications for elected officials and appointed staff, assistance on a multitude of topics via their website, lobbying for municipalities at the state and federal level, and opportunities for municipalities to participate in insurance and investment pools to strengthen bargaining and buying power.

### **Legislative Bulletin**

The League provides a weekly update covering proposed legislation at the state level on its website. It is a helpful way to remain up-to-date on State legislation that may affect River Falls residents.

### **UW-Extension, Local Government Center**

432 N. Lake Street, Room 439  
Madison, WI 53706  
608-262-9961  
<https://lgc.uwex.edu/>

The Government Center provides a variety of educational options to assist municipalities. They provide workshops, conferences, online and print educational materials, research, and assistance in special requests from governments.

### **City of River Falls**

222 Lewis Street  
River Falls, WI 54022  
715-425-0900  
<http://www.rfcity.org/>

### **State of Wisconsin**

Listed below are some of the potentially helpful resources and contact information for various State agencies.

Department of Revenue	608-266-2486	
<a href="https://www.revenue.wi.gov/">https://www.revenue.wi.gov/</a>		
Department of Natural Resources	888-936-7463	<a href="https://dnr.wi.gov/">https://dnr.wi.gov/</a>
Department of Transportation	715-836-2891	
<a href="https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/home.aspx">https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/home.aspx</a>		
Bureau of Transit and Local Roads	608-266-0189	<a href="https://wisconsin.gov/">https://wisconsin.gov/</a>
State Ethics Board	608-266-8123	
<a href="https://ethics.wi.gov/Pages/home.aspx">https://ethics.wi.gov/Pages/home.aspx</a>		
Wisconsin Elections Board	608-266-8005	<a href="https://elections.wi.gov/">https://elections.wi.gov/</a>

### **National League of Cities**

660 North Capitol Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
877-827-2385  
[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

The NLC represents municipal governments through the country. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. It provides a variety of learning and networking opportunities, as well as municipal representation at the federal level.

## Chapter 8: Directory

<b>Scot Simpson</b>	City Administrator	Administration	715-426-3402
<b>Jennifer Smith</b>	Chief of Staff	Administration	715-426-3441
<b>Dan Toland</b>	Mayor	City Council	715-220-4790
<b>Todd Bjerstedt</b>	Aldersperson – District 4	City Council	651-248-1099
<b>Jeff Bjork</b>	Aldersperson – At Large	City Council	715-629-7655
<b>Nick Carow</b>	Aldersperson – District 2	City Council	715-426-2006
<b>Sean Downing</b>	Aldersperson -District 1	City Council	715-307-2057
<b>Scott Morrisette</b>	Aldersperson – At Large	City Council	715-307-2335
<b>Michael Page</b>	Aldersperson – District 3	City Council	612-810-3949
<b>Diane Odeen</b>	Aldersperson – At Large	City Council	715-426-5325
<b>Amy White</b>	Community Services Director/ Clerk	City Clerk	715-426-3408
<b>Amy Peterson</b>	Community Development Director	Community Development	715-426-3425
<b>Todd Nickleski</b>	City Engineer	Engineering	715-426-3409
<b>Josh Solinger</b>	Finance Director/City Treasurer	Finance	715-426-3449
<b>Vacant</b>	Fire Chief	Fire	715-426-3534
<b>Karen Bergstrom</b>	Human Resources Director	Human Resources	715-426-3444
<b>Tanya Misselt</b>	Library Director	Library	715-426-3498
<b>Gordon Young</b>	Police Chief	Police	715-426-3536
<b>Matt Kennett</b>	Deputy Police Chief	Police	715-426-3524
<b>Erica Ellefson</b>	Public Works Manager	Operations	715-426-3406
<b>Kevin Westhuis</b>	Utility Director	Utility	715-426-3442
<b>Brooks Ostendorf</b>	Conservation and Parks Manager	Community Development	715-426-3467
<b>Keri Schreiner</b>	Economic Development Manager	Community Development	715-426-3469

# APPENDIX A: Aldermanic Districts



### Voting Locations

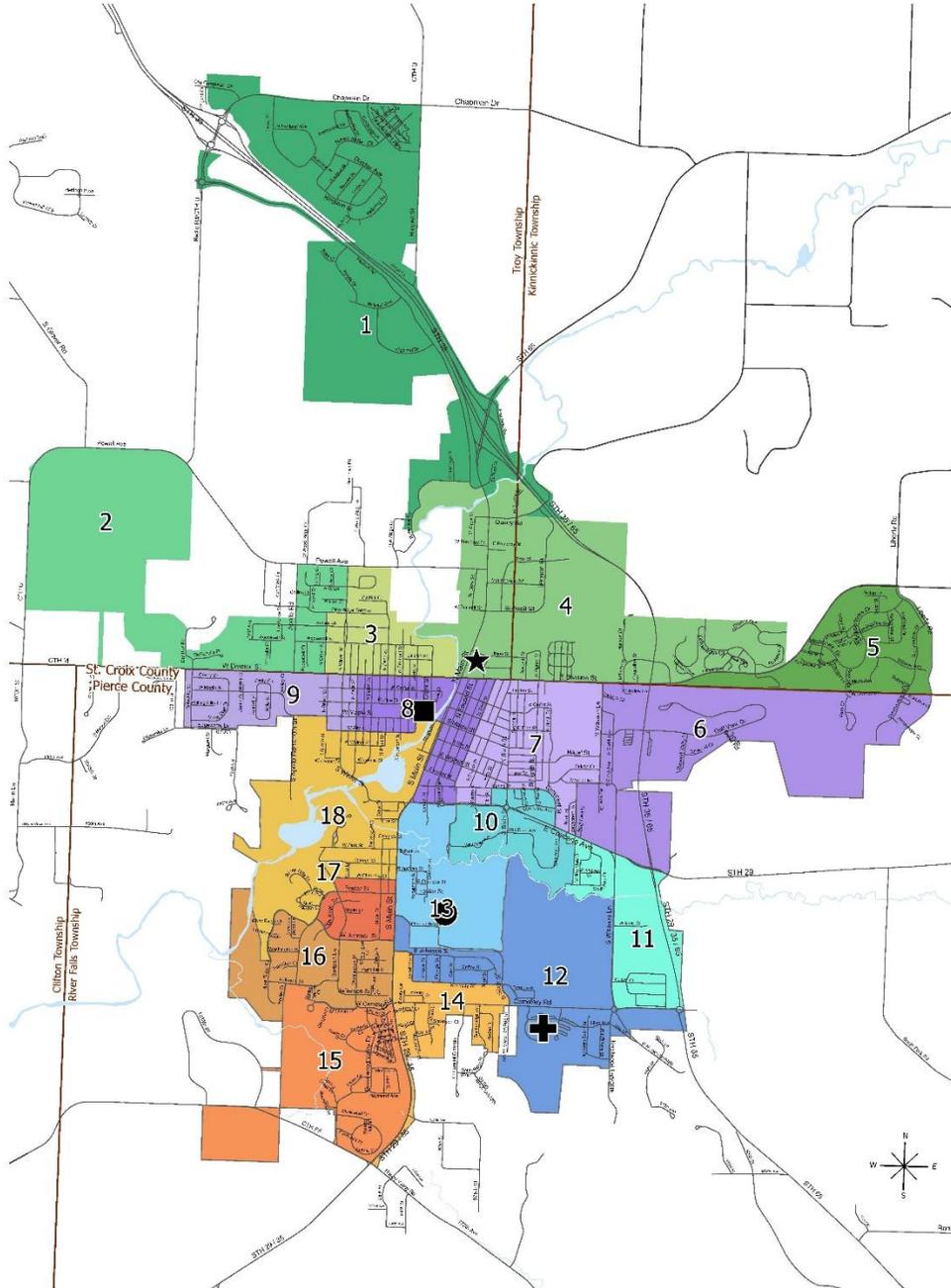
★ Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
River Falls Public Library  
140 Union St

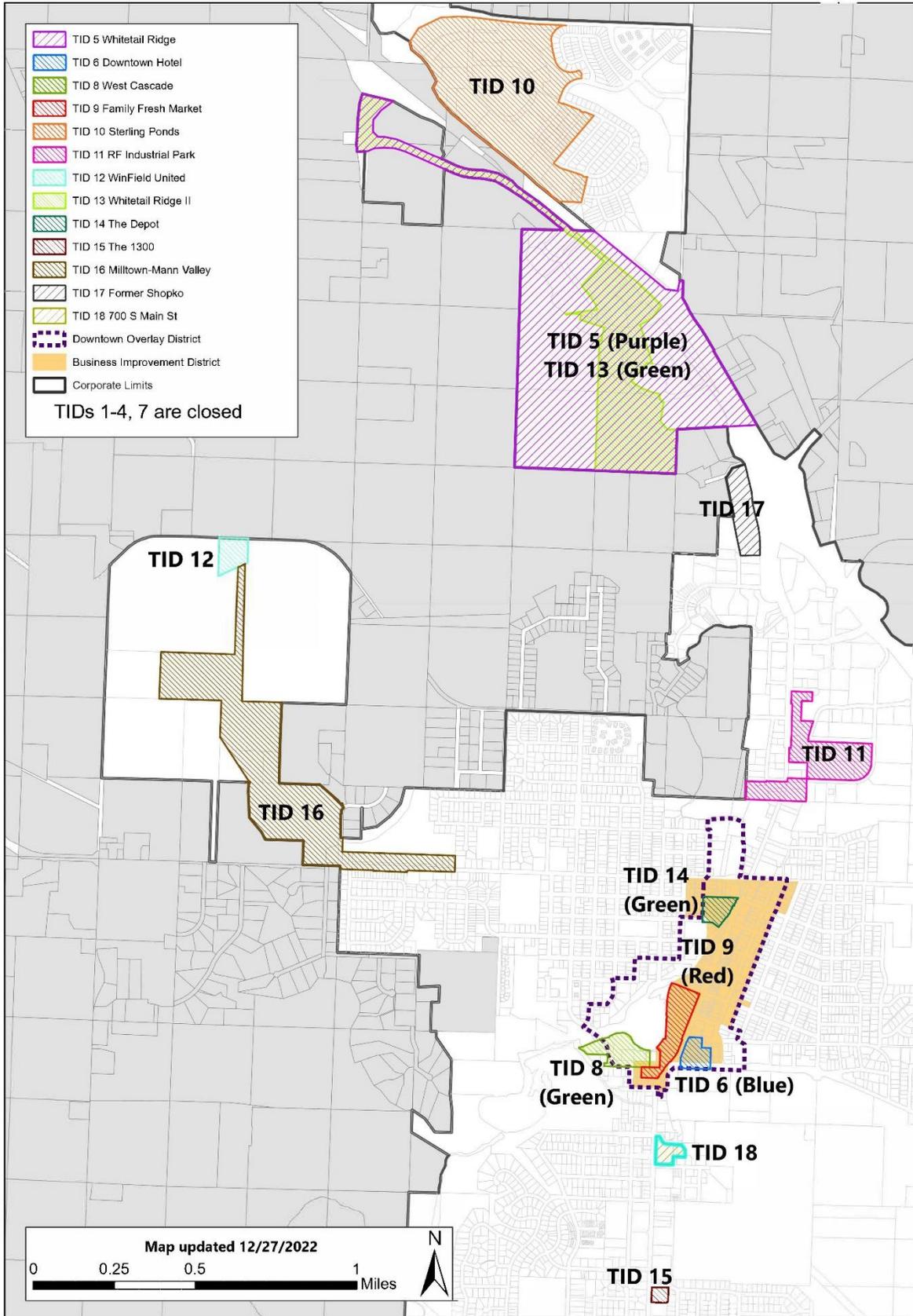
⊕ Wards 14, 15, 16, 17, 18  
River Falls High School  
818 Cemetery Rd

■ Wards 6, 7, 8, 9  
City Hall  
222 Lewis St

● Wards 10, 11, 12, 13  
UWRP - Falcon Center  
185 Emogene Nelson Ave  
or 1110 S Main St

## Wards & Voting Locations





## APPENDIX C: [Wisconsin Statute 19.59](#)

### 19.59 Codes of ethics for local government officials, employees, and candidates.

- (1)
- (a) No local public official may use his or her public position or office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for the private benefit of himself or herself or his or her immediate family, or for an organization with which he or she is associated. A violation of this paragraph includes the acceptance of free or discounted admissions to a professional baseball or football game by a member of the district board of a local professional baseball park district created under subch. III of ch. 229 or a local professional football stadium district created under subch. IV of ch. 229. This paragraph does not prohibit a local public official from using the title or prestige of his or her office to obtain campaign contributions that are permitted and reported as required by ch. 11.
  - (b) No person may offer or give to a local public official, directly or indirectly, and no local public official may solicit or accept from any person, directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the local public official's vote, official actions, or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction on the part of the local public official. This paragraph does not prohibit a local public official from engaging in outside employment.
  - (br) No local public official or candidate for local public office may, directly or by means of an agent, give, or offer or promise to give, or withhold, or offer or promise to withhold, his or her vote or influence, or promise to take or refrain from taking official action with respect to any proposed or pending matter in consideration of, or upon condition that, any other person make or refrain from making a political contribution, or provide or refrain from providing any service or other thing of value, to or for the benefit of a candidate, a political party, any committee registered under ch. 11, or any person making a communication that contains a reference to a clearly identified local public official holding an elective office or to a candidate for local public office.
  - (c) Except as otherwise provided in par. (d), no local public official may:
    - 1. Take any official action substantially affecting a matter in which the official, a member of his or her immediate family, or an organization with which the official is associated has a substantial financial interest.
    - 2. Use his or her office or position in a way that produces or assists in the production of a substantial benefit, direct or indirect, for the official, one or more members of the official's immediate family either separately or together, or an organization with which the official is associated.
  - (d) Paragraph (c) does not prohibit a local public official from taking any action concerning the lawful payment of salaries or employee benefits or reimbursement of actual and necessary expenses or prohibit a local public official from taking official action with respect to any proposal to modify a county or municipal ordinance.
  - (f) Paragraphs (a) to (c) do not apply to the members of a local committee appointed under s. 289.33 (7) (a) to negotiate with the owner or operator of, or applicant for a license to operate, a solid waste disposal or hazardous waste facility under s. 289.33, with respect to any matter contained or proposed to be contained in a written agreement between a municipality and the owner, operator or applicant or in an arbitration award or proposed award that is applicable to those parties.
  - (g)
    - 1. In this paragraph:

- a. "District" means a local professional baseball park district created under subch. III of ch. 229 or a local professional football stadium district created under subch. IV of ch. 229.
  - b. "District board member" means a member of the district board of a district.
2. No district board member may accept or retain any transportation, lodging, meals, food or beverage, or reimbursement therefor, except in accordance with this paragraph.
3. A district board member may receive and retain reimbursement or payment of actual and reasonable expenses for a published work or for the presentation of a talk or participation in a meeting related to processes, proposals and issues affecting a district if the payment or reimbursement is paid or arranged by the organizer of the event or the publisher of the work.
4. A district board member may receive and retain anything of value if the activity or occasion for which it is given is unrelated to the member's use of the time, facilities, services or supplies of the district not generally available to all residents of the district and the member can show by clear and convincing evidence that the payment or reimbursement was unrelated to and did not arise from the recipient's holding or having held a public office and was paid for a purpose unrelated to the purposes specified in subd. 3.
5. A district board member may receive and retain from the district or on behalf of the district transportation, lodging, meals, food or beverage, or reimbursement therefor or payment or reimbursement of actual and reasonable costs that the member can show by clear and convincing evidence were incurred or received on behalf of the district and primarily for the benefit of the district and not primarily for the private benefit of the member or any other person.
6. No district board member may intentionally use or disclose information gained in the course of or by reason of his or her official position or activities in any way that could result in the receipt of anything of value for himself or herself, for his or her immediate family, or for any other person, if the information has not been communicated to the public or is not public information.
7. No district board member may use or attempt to use the position held by the member to influence or gain unlawful benefits, advantages, or privileges personally or for others.
8. No district board member, member of a district board member's immediate family, nor any organization with which the district board member or a member of the district board member's immediate family owns or controls at least 10% of the outstanding equity, voting rights, or outstanding indebtedness may enter into any contract or lease involving a payment or payments of more than \$3,000 within a 12-month period, in whole or in part derived from district funds unless the district board member has first made written disclosure of the nature and extent of such relationship or interest to the commission and to the district. Any contract or lease entered into in violation of this subdivision may be voided by the district in an action commenced within 3 years of the date on which the commission, or the district, knew or should have known that a violation of this subdivision had occurred. This subdivision does not affect the application of s. 946.13.
9. No former district board member, for 12 months following the date on which he or she ceases to be a district board member, may, for compensation, on behalf of any person other than a governmental entity, make any formal or informal appearance before, or negotiate with, any officer or employee of the district with which he or she was associated as a district board member within 12 months prior to the date on which he or she ceased to be a district board member.

10. No former district board member, for 12 months following the date on which he or she ceases to be a district board member, may, for compensation, on behalf of any person other than a governmental entity, make any formal or informal appearance before, or negotiate with, any officer or employee of a district with which he or she was associated as a district board member in connection with any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding, application, contract, claim, or charge which might give rise to a judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding which was under the former member's responsibility as a district board member within 12 months prior to the date on which he or she ceased to be a member.
11. No former district board member may, for compensation, act on behalf of any party other than the district with which he or she was associated as a district board member in connection with any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding, application, contract, claim, or charge which might give rise to a judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding in which the former member participated personally and substantially as a district board member.
- (1m) In addition to the requirements of sub. (1), any county, city, village, or town may enact an ordinance establishing a code of ethics for public officials and employees of the county or municipality and candidates for county or municipal elective offices.
- (2) An ordinance enacted under this section shall specify the positions to which it applies. The ordinance may apply to members of the immediate family of individuals who hold positions or who are candidates for positions to which the ordinance applies.
- (3) An ordinance enacted under this section may contain any of the following provisions:
- (a) A requirement for local public officials, other employees of the county or municipality and candidates for local public office to identify any of the economic interests specified in s. 19.44.
  - (b) A provision directing the county or municipal clerk or board of election commissioners to omit the name of any candidate from an election ballot who fails to disclose his or her economic interests in accordance with the requirements of the ordinance.
  - (c) A provision directing the county or municipal treasurer to withhold the payment of salaries or expenses from any local public official or other employee of the county or municipality who fails to disclose his or her economic interests in accordance with the requirements of the ordinance.
  - (d) A provision vesting administration and civil enforcement of the ordinance with an ethics board appointed in a manner specified in the ordinance. A board created under this paragraph may issue subpoenas, administer oaths, and investigate any violation of the ordinance on its own motion or upon complaint by any person. The ordinance may empower the board to issue opinions upon request. Records of the board's opinions, opinion requests and investigations of violations of the ordinance may be closed in whole or in part to public inspection if the ordinance so provides.
  - (e) Provisions prescribing ethical standards of conduct and prohibiting conflicts of interest on the part of local public officials and other employees of the county or municipality or on the part of former local public officials or former employees of the county or municipality.
  - (f) A provision prescribing a forfeiture for violation of the ordinance in an amount not exceeding \$1,000 for each offense. A minimum forfeiture not exceeding \$100 for each offense may also be prescribed.
- (4) This section may not be construed to limit the authority of a county, city, village, or town to regulate the conduct of its officials and employees to the extent that it has authority to regulate that conduct under the constitution or other laws.

- (5)
- (a) Any individual, either personally or on behalf of an organization or governmental body, may request of a county or municipal ethics board, or, in the absence of a county or municipal ethics board, a county corporation counsel or attorney for a local governmental unit, an advisory opinion regarding the propriety of any matter to which the person is or may become a party. Any appointing officer, with the consent of a prospective appointee, may request of a county or municipal ethics board, or, in the absence of a county or municipal ethics board, a county corporation counsel or attorney for a local governmental unit an advisory opinion regarding the propriety of any matter to which the prospective appointee is or may become a party. The county or municipal ethics board or the county corporation counsel or attorney shall review a request for an advisory opinion and may advise the person making the request. Advisory opinions and requests therefor shall be in writing. It is prima facie evidence of intent to comply with this section or any ordinance enacted under this section when a person refers a matter to a county or municipal ethics board or a county corporation counsel or attorney for a local governmental unit and abides by the advisory opinion if the material facts are as stated in the opinion request. A county or municipal ethics board may authorize a county corporation counsel or attorney to act in its stead in instances where delay is of substantial inconvenience or detriment to the requesting party. Except as provided in par. (b), neither a county corporation counsel or attorney for a local governmental unit nor a member or agent of a county or municipal ethics board may make public the identity of an individual requesting an advisory opinion or of individuals or organizations mentioned in the opinion.
- (b) A county or municipal ethics board, county corporation counsel or attorney for a local governmental unit replying to a request for an advisory opinion may make the opinion public with the consent of the individual requesting the advisory opinion or the organization or governmental body on whose behalf it is requested and may make public a summary of an advisory opinion issued under this subsection after making sufficient alterations in the summary to prevent disclosing the identities of individuals involved in the opinion. A person who makes or purports to make public the substance of or any portion of an advisory opinion requested by or on behalf of the person waives the confidentiality of the request for an advisory opinion and of any records obtained or prepared by the county or municipal ethics board, the county corporation counsel, or the attorney for the local governmental unit in connection with the request for an advisory opinion.
- (6) Any county corporation counsel, attorney for a local governmental unit or statewide association of local governmental units may request the commission to issue an opinion concerning the interpretation of this section. The commission shall review such a request and may advise the person making the request.
- (7)
- (a) Any person who violates sub. (1) may be required to forfeit not more than \$1,000 for each violation, and, if the court determines that the accused has violated sub. (1) (br), the court may, in addition, order the accused to forfeit an amount equal to the amount or value of any political contribution, service, or other thing of value that was wrongfully obtained.
- (b) Any person who violates sub. (1) may be required to forfeit not more than \$1,000 for each violation, and, if the court determines that a local public official has violated sub. (1) (br) and no political contribution, service or other thing of value was obtained, the court may, in addition, order the accused to forfeit an amount equal to the maximum contribution authorized under s. 11.1101 (1) for the office held or sought by the official, whichever amount is greater.
- (8)
- (a) Subsection (1) shall be enforced in the name and on behalf of the state by action of the district attorney of any county wherein a violation may occur, upon the verified complaint of any person.
- (b) In addition, and supplementary to the remedy provided in sub. (7), the district attorney may commence an action, separately or in conjunction with an action brought to obtain the remedy

provided in sub. (7), to obtain such other legal or equitable relief, including but not limited to mandamus, injunction, or declaratory judgment, as may be appropriate under the circumstances.

- (c) If the district attorney fails to commence an action to enforce sub. (1) (a), (b), or (c) to (g) within 20 days after receiving a verified complaint or if the district attorney refuses to commence such an action, the person making the complaint may petition the attorney general to act upon the complaint. The attorney general may then bring an action under par. (a) or (b), or both.
- (cm) No complaint alleging a violation of sub. (1) (br) may be filed during the period beginning 120 days before a general or spring election, or during the period commencing on the date of the order of a special election under s. 8.50, and ending on the date of that election, against a candidate who files a declaration of candidacy to have his or her name appear on the ballot at that election.
- (cn) If the district attorney for the county in which a violation of sub. (1) (br) is alleged to occur receives a verified complaint alleging a violation of sub. (1) (br), the district attorney shall, within 30 days after receipt of the complaint, either commence an investigation of the allegations contained in the complaint or dismiss the complaint. If the district attorney dismisses the complaint, with or without investigation, the district attorney shall notify the complainant in writing. Upon receiving notification of the dismissal, the complainant may then file the complaint with the attorney general or the district attorney for a county that is adjacent to the county in which the violation is alleged to occur. The attorney general or district attorney may then investigate the allegations contained in the complaint and commence a prosecution.
- (d) If the district attorney prevails in such an action, the court shall award any forfeiture recovered together with reasonable costs to the county wherein the violation occurs. If the attorney general prevails in such an action, the court shall award any forfeiture recovered together with reasonable costs to the state.

## APPENDIX D: Quick Reference

**Swearing-In:** You will be sworn in at the Organizational Meeting on the third Tuesday in April.

**Microphones:** The microphone at your chair in the Council chambers has an on/off switch. When the light is green, the microphone is on. Please speak into the microphone. You may leave your microphone on for the entire meeting, but keep in mind that the equipment is sensitive and will pick up side conversations and broadcast them in the room.

**Aldermanic Mail:** Your mail is available for pick-up at City Hall each day after 11 a.m. The mailboxes are in the Administration Department.

**Building Access:** You will be provided with a card that provides access to the Administration Office of City Hall after you are officially sworn in.

**E-mail/iPad:** You will be given a city email account and a city-issued tablet to use during your term (if you wish). When your elected service has ended, the tablet needs to be returned to the city. Please note: any information in your email account is considered public information. Please try to check your email frequently as both staff and your constituents will use this to contact you.

**Paycheck and HR Forms:** You are paid monthly. Your check will be direct deposited on the second pay term for the City. Human Resources staff will assist you in completing the appropriate paperwork for your paycheck and stipends.

**Stationery:** Letterhead, envelopes, and business cards can be provided for you, if needed, to use in your official role as Alderperson. Alderpersons handle their own correspondence.

**Municipal Code Book:** The River Falls Municipal Code is available online. Click the link ([River Falls Municipal Code](#)) to view city ordinances.

**City Website:** City information can be found on the city website at [www.rfcity.org](http://www.rfcity.org) including Council packets.

**Meeting Schedules:** Common Council meetings are held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 6:30 p.m.

**If you are unable to attend a meeting:** Please contact Kristi in the Clerk's Office 715-426-3403 or Scot or Jennifer at the Administrator's office at 715-426-3441. This communication is vital so that we know if there will be a quorum for the meeting.

**Agenda and Minutes:** Council meeting agendas and the supporting materials are an important element in preparing for a Council meeting. City staff will work with the Mayor to compile the agenda, gathering all pertinent information that should be addressed by Council. It is important that Council members notify staff of any topics that they would like to be included on the agenda. Decisions may only be made at public meeting regarding items listed on the agenda.

Staff is responsible for originating the agenda and supporting documents. The Council agenda and packet are compiled electronically and posted to the city's website ([www.rfcity.org](http://www.rfcity.org)) on the

Thursday prior to a Council meeting. At that time, the agenda will also be posted at City Hall, Library and Police Department. It is required by Wisconsin State Law that an agenda be posted at least twenty-four hours prior to a public meeting.

An important part of your role as a member of the Council is to review agenda materials prior to the Council meeting so that you are adequately informed of the topics to be discussed and can ask questions prior to the meeting and make decisions in an educated manner.

Following each Council meeting, staff will compose the minutes from that meeting. The minutes are a way to record attendees present and document important decisions that took place at the meeting. At the beginning of each Council meeting, you will be asked to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.