

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE INDEPENDENCE & MAPLE PLAIN CITY COUNCIL
JOINT BUSINESS MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025 – 7:15 P.M.
(Independence Council Chambers)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Independence City Council was called to order by Mayor Spencer at 7:15 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Spencer and Maas-Kuskke, Independence Councilmembers Betts, McCoy, Fisher, Maple Plain Councilmembers DeLuca, Francis, Burak and Arvizo

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Independence City Administrator Kaltsas and Maple Plain City Administrator Kolander, Independence Administrative Services Director Simon

VISITORS: See Sign-in Sheet

3. The City of Independence and Maple Plain held a Joint Council Meeting – Both Council's will sign the Fire Services Agreement with West Suburban Fire District. Refreshments to follow.

Mayor Brad Spencer of Independence called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees to the Independence City Hall, which he referred to as "neutral ground." He expressed appreciation for everyone's service and attendance at this historic occasion, noting that it represented the culmination of extensive work by many people.

Mayor Julie Maas-Kuskke of Maple Plain provided historical context for the consolidation effort, explaining that in early 2021, representatives from nine cities began meeting regularly as the "Future Fire Service Planning Group." This group collaborated with the state fire marshal, local fire departments, and municipalities to address the unsustainable nature of their current fire service model.

Mayor Maas-Kuskke highlighted that from the beginning, there were two main goals: ensuring residents would continue to receive exceptional fire service without disruption, and involving firefighters in the process. She acknowledged the legacy of the Maple Plain Fire Department dating back to 1930 and thanked all past and present members. She also expressed gratitude to Independence officials, including Mayor Spencer and city administrator, for their partnership and support in the consolidation process.

Chief Jeff Leuer of West Suburban Fire District spoke about the historic significance of the consolidation, explaining that it represents the future direction of fire service. He noted that at a recent conference, there was discussion about the need for fire department consolidation nationwide, particularly with increasing OSHA and other regulatory requirements. Chief Leuer described the scale of the consolidated department: 70 firefighters covering more than 80 square miles (larger than two cities the size of Plymouth), emphasizing that the consolidation was about creating efficiencies and improving service to residents.

Chief Rick Denneson of Maple Plain Fire Department described the consolidation as "precedent setting," noting that converting a municipal fire department into a private corporation was unusual and would likely become a model for others. He expressed appreciation for the cooperative relationship between Maple Plain and Independence, as well as the existing strong relationship between the Maple Plain and Loretto Fire Departments. Chief Denneson stated his excitement about the West Suburban model of training, duty crews, and inter-station cooperation, which he believed would best serve their communities.

Chief Leuer made special acknowledgment of his wife, Tricia, for her support throughout the consolidation process.

Mayor Spencer emphasized that the consolidation was not primarily about saving money but about helping firefighters better serve the community. He described the merger as representing years of effort, patience, and shared commitment that would result in stronger protection for lives and property.

The mayors and fire chiefs ceremoniously signed the agreement to combine the Maple Plain Fire Department into the West Suburban Fire District, effective December 16, 2025. Mayor Spencer distributed City of Independence challenge coins to participants who had not yet received them in appreciation of their service.

Mayor Spencer announced that refreshments were available and thanked everyone for their participation in this significant milestone.

4. ADJOURN.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amber Simon/ Recording Secretary