



City of Grand Forks
Staff Report
Committee of the Whole – May 11, 2026
City Council – May 18, 2026
City Council – June 1, 2026

Agenda Item: Grand Forks Event Center Commission – Grand Forks City Code Members and General Provisions Amendments

Submitted by: Todd Feland, City Administrator
Dan Gaustad, City Attorney
Maureen Storstad, Finance Director

Staff Recommended Action: Review and consider the current roles and responsibilities of the Grand Forks Events Center Commission and consider approving the attached Grand Forks Events Center Commission - Grand Forks City Code Members and General Provisions Amendments that provides for the City Council serving as the Grand Forks Event Center Commission.

Council Action - May 4, 2026: Motion by Fridolfs, second by Berg to refer to Committee of the Whole for further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Action - May 11, 2026: Motion by Osowski, second by Berg to receive and file staff recommendation. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Action - May 18, 2026:

Council Action – June 1, 2026

BACKGROUND:

In the early 2000s, the City Council established, via the Grand Forks City Code § 24-0201 et. seq., the Grand Forks Events Center Commission (Commission) to help lead and manage the Alerus Center on behalf of the City Council. The Commission is responsible for the operations, maintenance, and management of the Alerus Center based on the authority delegated by the Grand Forks City Council and City Code. The Commission has broad operational authority for the Alerus Center, while City of Grand Forks (City) oversight remains in place through reporting requirements, budget limits, audit access, and City Council approval on certain matters.

In general, the City Council set up the Commission to focus on the Alerus Center operations and management and to include Commission stakeholder membership that would add value to the Alerus Center's operations and management of one of the most important assets of the City that provides significant quality of life and economic impact to the City and region.. For the past 25 years of the Alerus Center's existence, the City and Commission have hired third party management companies and City administrative staff to perform day-to-day operations and management. Currently, Oak View Group (OVG) is the Alerus Center's third-party manager under a 10-year agreement that concludes at the end of 2027, and a Request for Proposal (RFP) process is planned in the future for a third-party manager to be selected and contracted with for 2028 and beyond.

The main powers of the Commission include the following related to the Alerus Center.

- Adopt policies, rules, and regulations for facility use and operations.
- Operate, maintain, and manage the facility and related property.
- Establish rental, use, and fee requirements.
- Promote events and enter contracts, leases, and agreements.
- Hire staff, consultants, and other support as authorized.
- Establish committees as needed to support Commission work.

The City Council retained authority and oversight of the Alerus Center to include the following.

- City Council approval is required for naming rights.
- Commission contracts shall not exceed City Council approved budget authority.
- The City Auditor or authorized representatives may examine the Commission's financial records.

Specifically, and as part of the establishment of the Commission, the Grand Forks City Code Chapter 24 currently provides for the following and as attached.

- 24-0202. Powers. The Commission shall have power to adopt such policies, procedures, rules and/or regulations as it may determine to be reasonably necessary and/or convenient to manage and promote the events center. The City shall own any real or personal property to include facility and ballroom naming authority. The Commission shall not enter into any contract or agreement that exceeds any appropriation or authorization within the annual budget approved by the City Council.
- 24-0203. Members and General Provisions. Commission membership and officers, terms, vacancies, compensation, meetings, quorum, and conduct. The Commission shall consist of seven (7) voting members and two (2) nonvoting members. Six (6) of the voting members are public at large members nominated by the mayor and ratified by city council and one (1) voting member shall be city council member nominated by the mayor and ratified by the city council The two nonvoting members shall represent the University of North Dakota and Visit Greater Grand Forks and are nominated by the mayor and ratified by the mayor. The Commission shall choose among the at large public voting members to act as chairperson and vice chairperson. The public at large voting members can serve for no more than two (2) consecutive three-year terms. The Commission members are not compensated.

The Commission meets monthly and as needed a Finance/Renovation Committee meets to receive information and make recommendations to the Commission.

- 24-0204. Regulations. The Commission shall keep a full and complete record of its transactions and activities and shall provide a detailed report on or before the first day of July of each year to the Mayor and City Council. The Commission shall provide the Mayor and City Council with monthly financial reports and on or before June 1 of each year shall provide the Mayor and City Council with a financial statement for the prior calendar year and prepare and submit and capital improvement plan budget and annual budget for the following year. The Commission shall comply with City Council regulations and resolutions regarding the acquisition and construction contracts. The Commission shall be subject to all police powers.
- 24-0205. All Commission funds shall be paid to the City and deposited in a City account in the name of the Commission.
- 24-0206 All agreements between the City and third parties, which relate to real and personal property and the City has assumed certain obligations shall be honored by the Commission.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF FACT:

- Currently there are three (3) public at large voting member vacancies of the seven (7) Commission public at large voting members and prior to filling the vacancies the City administration thinks now is a good time to discuss and deliberate on the Commission members and general provisions.
- The Commission membership structure has generally been in place during the over 25 years of the Alerus Center's existence.
- With a third-party management firm (currently Oak View Group (OVG)) operating and managing the Alerus Center, City administration is recommending the City Council serve in the Commission role.
- The recommended change to the City Council serving in the Commission role will further clear up lines of communication and authority and make decision making more efficient and effective.
- OVG, as the third-party manager, will continue to lead the day-to-day management and operation of the Alerus Center with City administrative staff leadership and management support and advice. OVG is supportive of the recommended change as many of its facilities are managed and operated in a similar manner to the proposed change to the City Council role.
- OVG and City administrative staff leadership will continue to engage and seek advice from strategic Alerus Center partners, such as Visit Greater Grand Forks and the University of North Dakota, and continue the positive, productive, and successful partnerships.
- The attached amendment to Grand Forks City Code § 24-0203 modifies Commission membership and officers to the Grand Forks City Council with the same terms as the City Council, and given the makeup of the commission under the amendment to be the City Council and Mayor, for efficiency, matters relating to the Alerus Center will be made part of the agenda, considered and decided during City Council meetings, rather by a separate meeting.
- The attached amendment to Grand Forks City Code § 24-0204 modifies monthly financial reporting, capital improvement planning budgeting, and annual budgeting to the City Council.
- The attached OVG Management Contract, 1st Amendment, and 2nd Amendment are included.
- The attached copy of the 10-year history of the Alerus Center profit/loss and capex with graphic.

SUPPORT MATERIALS:

- Ordinance Amending Grand Forks City Code § 24-0203 and § 24-0204.
- Current Grand Forks City Code § 24-0201 through 24-0206.
- OVG Management Contract, 1st Amendment, and 2nd Amendment.
- Copy of 10 Year History Alerus Center Profit/Loss and Capex with Graphic.