

used to aid with the replacement of a pumper apparatus for the Fire Department. The final \$290k has been set aside for the Water and Sewer Utility Fund, though no dedicated long-term plan was available in the 2026 presentation.

One of the largest rises from 2025 is the \$1.4 million increase in salaries and benefits. Contributing factors include a \$417k increase in an extra payroll period, a 3% salary adjustment across the board adding up to \$283k, and the hiring of seven new city employees (a Real Property Appraiser, a CPU Information Systems Specialist, a Domestic Violence Detective, a Street Equipment Operator, and 3 Firefighters/EMTs) with a combined salary of \$578k. Other increases contribute a total of \$159k to the rise.

Operations and Maintenance has notably seen a \$611,000 increase from the 2025 budget, due in part to increases in subsidies (\$121k), repairs and maintenance (\$313k), and professional fees and services (\$27k). The supply budget, on the other hand, saw a \$98k decrease from the previous year.

2026's budget presentation also includes

#### ATTENTION

#### BARLEY GROWERS

The North Dakota Barley Council election for Morton County will take place on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 5:00 PM (CT) at the Morton County Fairgrounds, 1000 8th Street North, in New Salem, ND.

#### ELECTION

Each person, landlord, tenant, husband and/or wife who planted Barley in 2025 or intends to plant Barley in 2026 and who has not claimed any barley tax refund within the past year (except for duplicate payments), are eligible electors and can be candidates.

For more information contact the North Dakota Barley Council at 701-929-0123.

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a discussion of the city's revenues, which total \$49.2 million in 2025. This was sourced primarily from service charges that have brought in \$15.4 million, with other major contributions coming from city sales and use taxes (\$8.9 million), intergovernmental work (\$8.3 million), property taxes (\$7.3 million), and special assessments (\$6.3 million). Other unnamed sources also brought in \$3 million in revenue.

A total of \$9.6 million is laid out for debt service. Out of this, \$7.2 million will be used to deal with principal payments, and \$2.2 million will go towards interest payments. An extra \$259,000 is also planned to address service charges and issuance costs.

The General Fund also contributes \$20.1 million to this 2026 budget. In their presentation, Mandan outlined eight major aspects that resulted in this total: property taxes (\$6.9m), state aid and highway taxes (\$3.9m), city sales and use taxes (\$3.9m), utility fund transfers (\$1.6m), investment earnings (\$1.2m), licenses/permits and charges for services (\$1.1m), operating rev-

enues (\$1.3m), and an extra unreserved fund balance of \$202k.

Lastly, the City Property Tax Levy, while only accounting for \$193k of the city budget, has seen a notable 2.2% increase from 2025, due in part to House Bill 1176 increasing the total property tax levy on existing property to 3%, a large \$274k increase in the General Fund, and minor increases in Library and Airport funding (at \$3k and \$21k, respectively). This is balanced out by a \$105k decrease in other funds. As far as the property tax itself goes, residential properties in Mandan are valued at \$300k plus a 3.5% average valuation increase. Based on the city's projected mill rate, Mandan expects a \$7.45 tax hike in 2026.

Even with all this data, though, not everything is fully fleshed out. An analysis of utility rates for 2026 and onward, at the time of the presentation, was still in progress, and the impact on utility customers has not yet been determined. Updates are expected as soon as they become available.

More information on the Mandan 2026 budget, including expense and revenue reports, can be found on the City of Mandan's website.

## Help Wanted

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# Community

Wednesday, January 7, 2026  
Morton County News Journal

## Local fire department responds to house fire on Christmas Eve

By Richard Mendoza

[mcnjreporter@gspublishing.net](mailto:mcnjreporter@gspublishing.net)

Volunteer firefighters of the New Salem Fire Department responded to a house fire located 11 miles southeast of New Salem shortly after 9 p.m. on Dec. 24. Just a mere few hours before Christmas Day, 15 of the department's firefighters sprang into action to help assist in the extinguishing of the fire, which required the use of four vehicle units (Engine 9696, Tanker 1, Tanker 2, and Attack 2) and 10,000 gallons of water.

According to New Salem Fire Chief Barry Schulz, there were concerns that equipment would freeze on

the night of the fire due to low temperatures. Efforts by the department to contain and extinguish the flames across a five-hour stretch were successful however, and the fire was reportedly put out on Christmas morning, Dec. 25, at 2:30 a.m.

Though the home was completely lost, no other buildings on the property were impacted by the fire, and the department announced no occupants were home at the time of the fire. Official ruling of the cause of the fire was announced as accidental, with Schulz saying, "it was probably furnace or electrical related".

With the fluctuating temperatures over re-

cent weeks, Schulz says farmers and residents in the area should keep an eye on their electrical equipment as temperatures begin to drop.

"Farmers, watch your stock tank heaters. When it starts getting cold again, your space heaters and extension cords, you always kind of watch out for all that stuff," Schulz stated.

Based on 2020-2024 research by the National Fire Prevention Association, "space heaters and heating stoves were the type of heating equipment responsible for the largest shares of losses in home heating equipment fires, accounting for nearly half (47%) of the fires."



photo | Brendan DeLuca-Rodenberg

**WORLD RECORD ACHIEVED!** Rockets explode during Mandan's New Year, New Light event, where Pegasus Fireworks set a new world record by launching 2.5 million Roman Candles during a twenty-minute show.

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