

City Council Meeting Minutes

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026 – 6:00 PM
COLUMBIA CITY, CITY HALL – 1840 SECOND STREET
CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY, COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

AGENDA ITEM 1 **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:**

CONVENED:

Mayor Alex Reed called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Alex Reed
Councilor Connie Quick
Councilor Lyle Bluhm

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Council President Rob Forman
Councilor Gordon Thistle

ALSO PRESENT:

Kim Karber, City Administrator/Recorder
Jerry Bartolomucci, Chief of Police
Micah Rogers, PW Superintendent

ATTORNEY PRESENT:

None

A quorum was present, and due notice had been published.

AGENDA ITEM 2 **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

None

AGENDA ITEM 3 **CITIZEN INPUT:**

Logan McKenzie Gilbert-Renner, 2450 5th Street, discussed how Columbia City describes itself as an ideal small town of beauty and livability where residents connect in safe neighborhoods and citizens collaborate with local government. He requested that the Council make a clear public statement that our City will not assist in immigration enforcement beyond what is required by law. He thinks a public declaration would reaffirm the City's commitment to a safe and secure community and reassure all residents they can trust local government regardless of immigration status, so they do not have to live in fear. Chief Bartolomucci stated they follow state law and do not ask for immigration status or report anyone to I.C.E., who has not called and asked them to assist in any operation. Mayor Reed stated people live in fear for all sorts of different reasons and is not sure what an affirmation from the City would do when we already have state laws that we follow that deal with that issue and there is nothing we can do as a City to prevent laws that are in place. After discussion, the Council did not think a proclamation was necessary for laws that are already in place. Chief Bartolomucci added that he hopes the community already knows and understands that we support everyone the same and follow the law.

AGENDA ITEM 4 COUNCIL REPORTS:

4.1 Audit Committee: Kim reported that the audit committee just met and had no findings. There is one outstanding question Kim reached out to the auditors for clarification. The next meeting will be in September.

4.2 Hazard Committee: Chair Quick reported that they had met at the end of January. There are a couple of things they are looking into. Chief Bartolomucci added they are talking with Corey Padron with Columbia County EOC to put together a small quick reference book. A CERT team is also something they are working on to get started. They are not participating in the City's Centennial and will stay focused on the City Celebration instead. The next meeting will be March 31st.

4.3 Parks Committee: Chair Bluhm reported the Parks Advisory Committee that was put together for input on the Parks Master Plan update, recommended approval of the final update and there will be a vote on it later in the meeting.

4.4 Streets Committee: Kim reported the City will be applying for the Small City Allotment grant again. If we are not successful with the grant this year, there will be money allotted in the budget for us to move forward with fixing some of the streets that are in the worst shape.

4.5 Water & Sewer Committee: Kim reported the items list was updated for the 5-year capital improvement plan. Kim also reported that most of the projects that were in the water and sewer master plans from 2013 have been completed. The biggest remaining focus will be on the 'K' Street pump station and replacing the steel septic tanks.

AGENDA ITEM 5 CONSENT AGENDA:

5.1 Bills paid with check numbers 35856 through 35905 during the month of January 2026.

5.2 Expense vs Budget Report for the month ending January 31, 2026.

5.3 Combined balance sheet for the month ending January 31, 2026.

5.4 Minutes of the January 15, 2026, Regular City Council Meeting.

5.5 Activity Report from the City Administrator for the month of January 2026.

5.6 Activity Report from the Public Works Superintendent for the month of January 2026.

5.7 Activity Report from the Chief of Police for the month of January 2026.

5.8 ~~Professional Services Agreement between the City of Columbia City and Kim Karber.~~

5.9 Minutes of the August 26, 2025, Hazard Committee Meeting.

5.10 Minutes of the September 17, 2025, Audit Committee Meeting.

5.11 Letter from the Columbia City Community Club Members.

5.12 Minutes of the January 30, 2026, City Council Workshop Meeting.

5.13 Minutes of the February 9, 2026, Streets Committee Meeting.

Item 5.8 was removed from the consent agenda so it could be discussed further.

THE COUNCIL APPROVED THE CONSENT AGENDA BY UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.

AGENDA ITEM 6 UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

AGENDA ITEM 7 NEW BUSINESS:

7.1 Election Request for endorsement from the Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District of their Resolution 26-01.

Jeremy Hipes, Executive Director, spoke about the 9-1-1 levy that will be on the May ballot. He has been with Columbia 9-1-1 for 6 months but has 26 years of experience. He explained that when there is an emergency, Columbia 9-1-1 is where you call. There is no back-up, alternative, or plan B. The levy is at the same rate it has been at over the past 25 years; it accounts for 40% of their operating budget. If they levy does not pass, they will have to lay off 40% of their dispatchers and response times will go up. They have been using the reserves that were intended for radio maintenance and upgrades to continue their current operating level. Jeremy talked about how it is time to reform the district, they have made mistakes and it is time to move forward and fix it, that is what he was brought in for. The 9-1-1 Communication system belongs to the Columbia County voters, it is a community service system. Rich Neumond, the co-chair of the Friends of 9-1-1 PAC, also spoke regarding the importance of passing the levy in May and asked for the Council's endorsement.

Mayor Reed questioned why they are not asking for an increase in the levy amount. Jeremy explained that because people's budgets are already tight, they are going to stick with the current rate and he will look for alternate funding to do the radio system – bonds, grants, etc. Also, due to the bumpy track record with transparency, they want to wait to increase it until they can prove they deserve it. Mayor Reed also asked about the radio system and that we have heard it needs work. Jeremy replied he is in the process of having the ten radio sites evaluated from ground up. He wants to get the radio system stabilized and then start looking at what it will take to replace the system, which is 26-27 years old.

MOTION: MOVED (QUICK), SECONDED (BLUHM), TO ENDORSE THE COLUMBIA 9-1-1 LOCAL LEVY MEASURE AT THE CURRENT RATE ON THE MAY ELECTION. MOTION PASSED (3-0). AYE (QUICK, BLUHM, REED); ABSENT (THISTLE, FORMAN)

7.2 Council Bill No. 26-1015: A Resolution Authorizing the Adoption of the City of Columbia City Parks Master Plan.

Steve Duh with Conservation Technix gave a PowerPoint overview via Zoom on the project of updating the Parks Master Plan. He highlighted what they heard from the public during the community engagement process, referenced how the plan was put together, and highlighted some of the project recommendations. He explained the Parks Master Plan is intended to serve as the City's 20-year strategic plan for all things parks and open space related. It will help the City have a framework and guide for future investments in the parks system. It will also hopefully help the City with pursuit of grants, funding, and partnership opportunities. The overall timeline for the update was about 10 months, which started last spring with visits to all of the parks, open spaces, and trails. They worked with Kim and PW to get an understanding of the challenges and issues on the ground. There were meetings with the Parks Advisory Committee who were important in guiding and providing feedback throughout the process. After the information gathering was complete Steve worked on updating goals and policies, identifying overall Citywide needs and gaps that are in the system. Steve mentioned that there was a substantial response to the survey that was mailed out to every household in Columbia City. There were 236 responses which he felt gave him a strong base of information about the current preferences and priorities of the parks and open spaces and really provided a solid baseline of understanding for what the current needs are of the City. One key takeaway was that nine out of ten respondents stated that local parks and recreational opportunities are either important or essential to the quality of life in Columbia City. Top priorities showed that there was a strong interest in expanding trail opportunities, improving and upgrading existing parks, and providing more covered space for picnics/gatherings. He then went over what the different sections of the Parks Master Plan entailed. One thing Steve wanted to note was the 20-year capital project plan and strategies to consider for future implementation. It is a list, it is not an official budget, but it is a planning tool.

Mayor Reed inquired about whether the survey response was a good crosscut of the population in the City. Steve replied it is, especially for the size of our community and reiterated that a 28% response rate is substantial and thinks it is good, solid data.

Councilor Quick asked if there was any consideration to eliminate some of the smaller parks. Steve replied it was discussed during the park advisory meetings, and the discussion was framed around what are the benefits of reducing the number of parks. The challenge is the size and location and if there would be a viable buyer for those properties. If there is not, the City still would have to maintain them.

Mayor Reed asked about any specific recommendations for Pixie Park since it is on the river and there have been requests for life vests. Steve replied that there were recommendations for ADA improvement but not to formalize or encourage access to the river due to liability/safety issues.

Councilor Bluhm added the Parks Advisory Committee had gone through things with Steve several times throughout the several months he was working on it and everything was covered quite well. Steve's reports are good and he has covered a lot of the issues/questions that came up and he addressed those as well. Councilor Bluhm also stated that it has been a good, thorough process and the plan is ready to move forward.

MOTION: MOVED (QUICK), SECONDED (BLUHM), TO ADOPT COUNCIL BILL 26-1015. MOTION PASSED (3-0). AYE (QUICK, BLUHM, REED); ABSENT (THISTLE, FORMAN)

7.3 Library Presentation.

Cathy Lundberg, Library Director & President of the Friends of the Columbia City Community Library, requested Council to allocate \$15,000 from the general fund to support the library. Cathy spoke about how the library has been a part of Columbia City and the County for the last 25 years. It is committed to providing no cost access to the library for all of Columbia County. In December of 2022, the library went through a strategic planning process for 2023-28 and has achieved many of its goals. They rely heavily on volunteers and have made important progress towards sustainable services. By hiring a part time office manager in January 2026, they are able to be open 5 days a week. Through grants they have been able to revitalize the children's section with new books, purchase child size furniture, and comfortable adult chairs. They also do grab-n-go craft kits, partner with the RISE after school program by hosting book readings along with crafts and games for students in first through fifth grades one Wednesday a month, publish a quarterly newsletter, have a free meeting space for community groups, host community events, partner the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, etc. They have seen a significant increase in patrons at the library as well as Friends of the Library members following the many improvements. They pursue grants but those do not generally cover operating expenses, which are increasing. The modular building the library is currently housed in is an in-kind donation from the school and the library is responsible for its maintenance and utilities. A packet was provided to Council with the library's Strategic Plan, 2026-27 budget, most recent newsletter, and some other information.

The Council will discuss the request at future meetings.

7.4 Council Bill No. 26-1016: A Resolution Adopting Policy Goals and Objectives for The City of Columbia City, Oregon, for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

MOTION: MOVED (QUICK), SECONDED (BLUHM), TO ADOPT COUNCIL BILL 26-1016. MOTION PASSED (3-0). AYE (QUICK, BLUHM, REED); ABSENT (THISTLE, FORMAN)

7.5 Audited Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2025.

Savannah Halter and Ash Farishta gave a presentation via Teams on the FY 2025 audit. Savannah stated it was the first year auditing the City and said it went very well. She said

Kim was easy to get information from and very responsive, which is appreciated since that is how they get their work completed faster. She thanked Mayor and Council for their time volunteering for the City and the time they took to answer their questions. Savannah also stated that it was a clean audit, there were clean books and there were no outstanding questions. The interim audit for FY 2026 will be sometime in April to mid-May, and then onsite will be late July to mid-October. Ash also thanked the City for their responsiveness throughout the audit which helps with the efficiency of the audit. She went over their process and the scope of the financial statement and what they do as auditors. They are required to do a significant range of procedures which include: inquiries to gain an understanding of internal controls and risk assessment; reviewed specific documents to evaluate the accuracy of the transactions; verified account balances; tested the compliance with legal, federal, and state laws. With this being the first year they audited us they had to request paperwork from the previous auditors to verify the previous balances as well. Ash then proceeded to go over a PowerPoint of some numbers that are in the annual financial audit report they provided us with. She stated it was a clean report and there were no material mistakes in the financial report.

Mayor Reed commented that the City has an internal audit committee and they have produced the same conclusions that there does not seem to be much of a change and there are no leaks in the system. Ash stated that everything was great. Councilor Bluhm asked if there were any recommendation and Ash said they would definitely let us know if they have any and they currently do not have any.

MOTION: MOVED (BLUHM), SECONDED (QUICK), TO ACCEPT THE JUNE 30, 2025, AUDIT REPORT FROM UMPQUA VALLEY FINANCIAL.
MOTION PASSED (3-0). AYE (QUICK, BLUHM, REED); ABSENT (THISTLE, FORMAN)

7.6 Professional Services Agreement between the City of Columbia City and Kim Karber.

MOTION: MOVED (REED), SECONDED (QUICK), TO ACCEPT THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY AND KIM KARBER.
MOTION PASSED (2-1). AYE (QUICK, REED); NAY (BLUHM) ABSENT (THISTLE, FORMAN)

AGENDA ITEM 8 OTHER BUSINESS:

8.1 Review of the Salary Steps.

Council would like to review the City's salary steps at a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 9 ADJOURNMENT:

9.1 There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

APPROVED:

Alexander Reed
Mayor

ATTEST:

Kim Karber
City Administrator/Recorder