

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 31, 2026
TO: Milton-Freewater Mayor/City Council
FROM: Tim Johnson, Interim City Manager
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report for January 17 - 31 2026

The following identifies meetings and actions that took place Jan. 17 -31 and items pending for January 2026.

Mayor/Council Meetings

- Meeting with Mayor every Wednesday, Jan 21 & 28
- Meetings with City Council members:
 - Council President Irving; Jan 22
 - Council member Holden; Jan 26
 - Council member Lyon; Jan 23
 - Council member Jensen; Jan 23
 - Councilmember Koklich; Jan 28
 - Jose Garcia, pending reschedule

Internal Meetings

- Department Directors Jan 26; 19th Holiday for City
- Individual Dept Directors meetings
- Weekly meeting with HR
- Staff meeting with Mayor on coordination of State of the City Address. Tuesday, February 24
See below



External Meetings

- Meeting with Kiwanis, Jan. 22
- Meeting with Filed Representative for US Senator Wyden, Andrew Cutler, Jan. 27. Meeting included two meet and greets: One for Holden & Jensen with mayor Odman and the second for Irving and Koklich with mayor to ensure no quorum or violation of public meeting laws.
 - Discussion involved seeking funding for the "Middle Reservoir" project. The requirements for the application of Congress/Senate Capital/Community Infrastructure Program on water, specifically on well/pump in south area was advised. Senator's staff recommended that the city apply as amount for this project is within the realm and framework of the grant program.
- Meeting with Congressman Cliff Benz, in Hermiston, attended with Mayor Odman and Councilmember Koklich on Jan. 28. Mayor and Councilman spoke specifically and extensively on the need for the City's water infrastructure. (See attachments on briefing material)
- Follow up occurred with Congressman's staff, work continued through the week.
- Discussion with City Consultants- Capital Path on WRDA grant

Other

City Manager

City Manager Recruitment

- RFP was initiated and sent to 10 recruitment firms in the northwest and across the west. Responses are due by Friday, February 6th
- City Manager initiated formulation of report on Fleet Management and Maintenance. Initiated multi-disciplinary team meeting to examine opportunities. Expect to brief Councilmembers individually in March with full presentation in April. Councilmember Koklich attended meeting.
- Discussion of Youth Representatives on Council. Discussion with Mayor and City Recorder identified that this should be aligned with the school year. Given current situation the current situation, it was identified to wait to initiate the opportunity with a new city manager.
- City to host Mayors/Manager meeting for Umatilla County third Thursday in February. TBD

City Manager/Finance

- Continued work on Mid-Year report with Finance. Presentation for February Council meeting. This will include presentation of draft Budget Calendar
 - Finance also dispersed Budget Worksheets to Departments on time

Finance

- In receipt of Audit 24/25. Currently being reviewed. Expect submission to Council later in February

Library

- Library Board met on Jan. 24th. They went over their Strategic Plan specifically Vision Statement revisit.
 - Additionally, library applied for two grants, First to Windemere Real Estate for \$1,000 and Dollar General for \$2,000 for summer reading program. Additionally applying for T-Mobile Grant for security cameras.
- Safety Inspect Report for 4th Qtr. was published. Items are now being responded to by Departments. See Attachment.

Public Works

- Recreation Committee met. Jacque Barthel Fox resigned effective Jan. 19th due to health reason. A thank you note for her service was provided.
- Parks Supervisor position deadline was Friday, January 30. There were 16 applicants two from within. As standard procedure, all internal candidates will be interviewed. As of the date of this report, no dates for interviews have been identified. However, they will occur in February.
- Public Works Superintendent Recruitment is pending with recruitment firms providing responses to RFP by Friday, February 6th
- Submission of federal and state grants for Water Infrastructure efforts, i.e., WRDA and CIP.

City Light & Power

- Submitting grant to WRDA for assistance with substation improvements.

Code Enforcement/Nuances Abatement

- Work continues on a variety of sites issuing actions to property owners

ATTACHMENTS

Water Infrastructure Cut Sheets and Briefing

Completing Well 10

The City of Milton-Freewater is seeking **\$2M in Federal funding** for construction of a pumphouse, piping, and a backup generator for Well 10.

Secured funding to date is a combination of state and city funding in the amount of \$1.7M

Investment in Well 10 will:

- **Increase reliability** by replacing a broken well
- **Protect public health** with high-quality drinking water
- **Expand economic development opportunities** for businesses
- **Allow additional housing units** to be built
- Support community readiness with **adequate water supplies for fighting wildfires** near the Wildland Urban Interface
- **Ensure reliable access to water** for residents, schools, businesses, and others.
- **Provide the last dollars to complete Well 10**

Water is a critical resource for the daily lives of our citizens and for the safety of the community. The region's economic vitality is deeply rooted in the agricultural and wine industries, both of which depend on a reliable water supply.

Well 10 supports housing growth, infrastructure modernization, and long-term water security by replacing aging facilities, improving system reliability and community safety, and advancing sustainable water management to meet future demand.



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City of

MILTON-FREEWATER

Oregon

Replacing a Critical Drinking Water Reservoir



The City of Milton-Freewater must replace its 1956 drinking water reservoir that has a failed interior liner, to avoid impacts to water quality, system reliability, and emergency preparedness. This is critical for a vulnerable and underserved population with federally designated Low-Income Opportunity areas (15.2% poverty rate, affecting an estimated 1,070 residents).

Requested Federal Funding

\$1M for design
\$12M for construction

Funding Secured

City has spent \$65k on land purchase, preliminary engineering, and geotechnical

Why This Project Is Needed Now

- 
- **Public Health Risk:** Failed liner causes corrosion, water quality degradation, and structural failure.
 - **Emergency Protection:** Maintains pressure & fire flow for homes, businesses, critical facilities. This reservoir feeds all but one of the schools in town and the nursing home.
 - **End of Useful Life:** Nearly 70 years old, exceeds design life.
 - **Rising Costs of Delay:** Construction & failure risks increase annually.

What the Project Delivers

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- **Safe Drinking Water:** Meets current state & federal standards.
 - **System Resilience:** Enhanced seismic performance, reliability, flexibility.
 - **Emergency Readiness:** Reliable storage for firefighting & disaster response.
 - **Long-Term Cost Control:** Ends recurring repairs & outages.
 - **Community Benefits:** Protects public health & economy, strengthens regional response, aligns with resilience & sustainability goals.

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Aquifer Storage & Recovery Project

Building a Life-Sustaining Water Treatment Plant and ASR in Rural Oregon

The City of Milton-Freewater is embarking on a water security initiative to ensure long term access to water for the growing community of more than 7,300 residents.

This effort will expand and modernize the city's water system to reactivate an existing supply, increase storage capacity, and improve system resilience in the face of growth, drought, and climate-related pressures.



Next phase, the City is requesting \$1.5-\$2M. Total project cost is estimated at \$10-15M

\$1.4M in State funding secured



Milton-Freewater relies entirely on a declining groundwater aquifer for drinking water for 7,300+ residents.

The community is a federally designated low-income Opportunity Zone, with roughly 22% of households and 15.2% of residents below the poverty line, exceeding state/national rates.

The City pursues economically sustainable water security via ASR—recharging the aquifer with treated drinking water for future recovery—to ensure equitable access for low-income/working families.

This project is identified in the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan. Walla Walla Water 2050 is a long-term regional planning process focused on ensuring a sustainable, reliable, and resilient water supply for the Walla Walla Basin through integrated management of groundwater, surface water, and community needs.

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Securing Reliable Drinking Water Infrastructure



Replacing the Middle Reservoir — **\$13M (Design + Construction)**
Completing Well 10 — **\$2M**

City of Milton-Freewater | January 27, 2026

Why these projects?

Reliable water is essential for public health, housing, and safety

- Aging infrastructure under increasing stress
- Limited redundancy in the system

A small, rate-sensitive community

- Drinking water for residents, schools, healthcare, and businesses
- Fire protection and emergency response
- Limited ability to self-fund large capital projects

Without action:

- Higher risk of water shortage
- Reduced emergency capacity
- Increased public health risk

Complete Well 10

Funding Request: \$2M

- City and State funding in place to drill the well
- Final construction funding needed for the pump house & system connections
- Adds a reliable, independent water source with generator backup to improve redundancy and emergency capacity

High return, near-term impact

- Shovel-ready and maximizes prior investments
- Immediate gains and decades of reliable supply



Replace the Middle Reservoir

Funding Request: \$13M (Design + Construction)

- Aging, constrained reservoir
- Central to storage, pressure, and fire protection
- Includes **final design and full replacement**

What the New Reservoir Delivers

- Modern, resilient storage built for current and future growth
- Fire flow and emergency reliability
- Reduced failure and maintenance risk
- Designed to current safety and climate standards



Federal Alignment

Directly supports federal priorities

- Small and disadvantaged communities
- Climate resilience and redundancy
- Planning-to-implementation delivery

Federal partnership requested

- **\$2M** — Complete Well 10
- **\$13M** — Design & replace Middle Reservoir
- **Next steps**
 - Guidance on funding pathways
 - Support advancing these projects this cycle