
CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER GOVERNING BODY

Destiny Jensen At Large, Position 1
Steve Irving - Council President At Large, Position 2
Wes Koklich At Large, Position 3

Mike Odman
John Lyon
Emily Holden
Jose Garcia

Mayor
Ward 1
Ward 2
Ward 3

CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER**August 11, 2025****CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met in regular session on Monday, August 11, 2025 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8th Avenue at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Mike Odman, Councilors John Lyon, Wes Koklich, Steve Irving, Emily Holden and Destiny Jensen arriving at 7:05 p.m.

Councilor Jose Garcia was absent.

Youth Representative Norma Rodriguez and Zachary Lamb were present.

Staff members present were: City Manager Chad Morris, City Recorder Leanne Steadman, Police Chief Joe Shurtz, Finance Director Laurie Bubar, Fire Chief Shane Garner, Library Director Lili Schmidt, Court Clerk Tracy Martinez, Electric Superintendent Richard Jolly, Electric Engineering Technician Tina Kain, Public Works Engineering Technician Steven Patten, Public Works Supervisor Nathan Lyon, Public Works Supervisor Matt Chesnut, Public Works Assistant/Project Aid Krista Gannon and Parks Maintenance Worker Jorge Estrada.

Guests and citizens present were: Kate York, Sally Babcock, Chris Mitchell, Judi Kelley, Megan Hoel, Kelsey Handman, Terrie Good, Randy Reese, Rachel Chaney, Dennis Rea, Corky York, Abigail Close, Mikayla Close-John, Kelly Skramstad, Adriann Close, Aimee Close, Ryan Westman, Emily Martin, Douglas Venn, Sandra Snook, Marlene McClintock, Kay West, Markie McRae and Douglas Keltner.

Representing the news media was: Sherrie Widmer of the Valley Herald.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Regular Session Minutes from July 14, 2025
- Work Session Minutes from July 28, 2025

Councilor Irving motioned to approve all items on the Consent Calendar. Councilor Lyon seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor. Councilor Jensen was absent for the vote.

PRESENTATION ITEMS:**INTRODUCTION – PIONEER POSSE COURT**

The Pioneer Posse Court, Queen Kira, Princess Abigail and Princess Mikayla introduced their self and shared what they most appreciated about being on the court. Mayor Odman presented each of

them a certificate of recognition for their dedication and contributions to promoting the community throughout the Northwest.

PROPOSAL – BUSINESS OWNER REPRESENTATION

Megan Hoel, a business owner in the city of Milton-Freewater, presented the idea of creating a non-voting advisory position on the city council titled “Business Owner Representative”. Her proposal listed eligibility as being an owner and operator of a business in Milton-Freewater city limits and must reside in the 97862-zip code. The appointment process would be through open application, potentially overseen by a committee of residents, business leaders, and/or city staff. This position would attend city council meetings as a non-voting participant, offer input on issues affecting the local economy and business environment, it would help connect the council with stakeholders living outside city boundaries, but economically tied to city operations. She listed why she believed this position mattered as strengthening civic engagement, recognize economic contributions from outside city boundaries and to build a collaborative bridge between the city and its broader business community. She referenced the City of Ashland, Oregon as allowing non-residents who own property or operate businesses in the city to serve on certain committees and the Cities of Hood River and Bend as allowing non-resident members to serve on specific advisory boards based on expertise and investment. She stated the proposals also supports the Council’s Mission statement. She offered to assist with any follow-up in regards to policy development, outreach, or community input.

A brief discussion ensued.

Mayor Odman asked if the City of Ashland’s representative was part of the council.

Ms. Hoel, stated it was an advisory position.

Councilor Holden stated that the Planning Commission allows for one member to reside outside city limits but within the Urban Growth Boundary. She suggested to Ms. Hoel that she might want to consider serving on the budget committee.

Ms. Hoel asked how many budget meetings are held each year.

Council Holden stated there were two held this past year.

Councilor Jensen stated she believed the position better fit an advisory board.

Ms. Hoel explained she envisioned a round table discussion with business owners, then one representative would come to council and report.

Mayor Odman suggested collaboration with the city and Milton-Freewater Chamber Downtown Alliance (MFCDA).

Ms. Hoel stated with that, there was no option to vote. She said this is where her business is lacking representation.

Councilor Koklich suggested this be a future work session discussion item.

Councilor Irving stated the position didn’t need to be put in place, there are two business owners on the council that can represent and that he was opposed to any change.

Councilor Lyon asked if that was the role of MFCDA.

Ms. Hoel said the city's mission statement supports this type of representative. She said she has been speaking a lot as a business owner and haven't gotten much of a response.

Mayor Odman again suggested this being a discussion item at a future work session.

Councilor Jensen asked if public comment can be taken at a work session.

Mayor Odman replied, very possible.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

RESOLUTION NO. 2575 TRANSFER FUNDS DUE TO UNFORESEEN REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

The fire chief applied for a Wildfire Season Staffing grant with the Oregon State Fire Marshal and was notified that the grant application was successful. The funding amount of \$10,000 is to be used for additional staffing during peak wildfire season. These funds were not included in the fiscal year 2026 budget so an adjustment for unanticipated revenues and expenditures was necessary to stay in compliance with local budget law.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2575, Resolution to make appropriations due to Unforeseen Revenues and Expenditures. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

RESOLUTION NO. 2576 AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE TO A 5-YEAR CONTRACT WITH AXON ENTERPRISE, INC. FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT BODY CAMERA SUPPORT SERVICES

Currently the police department does not have body cameras. Body cameras provide an objective record of police interactions, reducing disputes over what occurred during encounters. Axon cameras offer seamless integration into the current Axon interview room cameras and their online Evidence.com secure cloud environment. Their online cloud environment also provides seamless transfer of videos between the Police Department and the District Attorney's Office for the prosecution of criminal cases. The contract was for 5-years of support services. Unlimited storage is included and the videos will be easily uploaded.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the software and updates.

Councilor Lyon asked if there will be a policy on the body cameras.

Chief Shurtz said he already had a policy ready to put into place.

City Manager Morris shared the expense was budgeted in the police department budget.

Brad Humbert 1813 Oak Street – stated it says it's a grant online.

Manager Morris stated it was not a grant.

Chief Shurtz said CIS is offering grant funds for body cameras and that he intended on applying for the grant.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2576, Resolution Authorizing Signature to a 5-year contract with Axon Enterprise, Inc. for an amount of \$104,711.70 at a cost of \$20,942.34 per year. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

RESOLUTION NO. 2577 AUTHORIZATION TO ENTER INTO INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH MILTON-FREEWAER CEMETERY DISTRICT #3 FOR WATER USAGE AT THE CEMETERY UNDER THE CITY'S EXISTING WATER RIGHTS

The Milton-Freewater Cemetery District #3 (District) has submitted a formal request for the consideration of including the cemetery property under the City of Milton-Freewater's existing water rights to facilitate irrigation of the cemetery grounds. The proposed agreement would be an Intergovernmental agreement between the City and the District. This request would require the City to submit a water rights transfer request to Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to change the existing water rights to include the cemetery land. The City has been working to consolidate existing water rights and was preparing to submit a water rights transfer request to OWRD. If the agreement is approved, the transfer paperwork will be modified to include the proposed cemetery lands. This would require working with a certified water rights examiner to make the necessary changes to the transfer documents.

Public Works Technician Steven Patten shared some background regarding the cemetery's cancellation of its water right. He also stated that the District will be solely responsible for operation, maintenance, and repairs of the their well, pump systems, and related infrastructure. The City assumes no responsibility for physical facilities at the point of diversion and shall have no liability for the condition, failure, or operation of the Well or for damages arising from its use.

Councilor Koklich asked if their usage will take away from the city since they will not be paying for the use.

Manager Morris stated their use will not impair the City's ability to deliver water to city water customers due to volume limitations. Their use will be minimal to the amount of water right the city maintains.

Mr. Patten shared that this water right allowance for the District was the idea of OWRD as a solution to the District's water issue.

Councilor Holden motion to adopt Resolution No. 2577, Resolution Authorizing Signature to an Intergovernmental Agreement with Milton-Freewater Cemetery District #3 for water usage at the cemetery under the City's existing water rights. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

RESOLUTION NO. 2578 AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE TO AGREEMENT S25012 WITH THE STATE OF OREGON FOR AN AWARD FOR SAFE DRINKING WATER REVOLVING LOAN FUND FOR A FORGIVABLE LOAN FOR THE PURPOSE OF A WATER RATE ANALYSIS

The State of Oregon, through Oregon Health Authority and Business Oregon, provides funding for Sustainable Infrastructure Planning Projects (SIPP). Staff applied for the SIPP program to analyze

water rates and was notified that the application was successful for a \$20,000, 100%, forgivable loan. The rate analysis will include the full cost of doing business by calculating current and future costs and expenses, evaluating current revenues and rate structure options, and designing an appropriate rate.

Councilor Lyon asked what was hoped to be gained from the study.

Manager Morris stated, efficiency of providing water and make sure the rates are covering the costs. The current water rates are lower than the state average.

Councilor Lyon stated the wells were not reading correctly.

Manager Morris stated he was still working on that.

Councilor Lyon asked if the wells were not reading correctly, wouldn't that skew the rate study.

Manager Morris said he believed they are reading as they should now.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2578, Resolution Authorizing Signature to Agreement S25012 with the State of Oregon, acting by and through its Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority of the Oregon Business Development Department for a Water Rate Analysis. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

RESOLUTION NO. 2579 DECLARATION OF SURPLUS VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

A list of vehicles and equipment was proposed to be deemed surplus. Method of liquidating would be by auction as recommended by Manager Morris.

Councilor Lyon made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2579, Resolution Declaring Property to be surplus as outlined on "Exhibit A". Councilor Jensen seconded the motion.

Mayor Odman took a comment from the audience before the roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Humbert recommended to council that no city employee be able to purchase any surplus items. He said it was a conflict of interest.

Mayor Odman asked if there was a policy that addressed this issue.

Manager Morris stated his intent was to use an auction company.

Councilor Lyon said if you didn't allow city employees to bid on the items it could be considered discrimination.

Councilor Koklich stated in the past it was done by an auction company.

Councilor Lyon withdrew his main motion. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

Councilor Irving made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2579, Resolution Declaring Property to be surplus as outlined on “Exhibit A” and be sold by public auction. Councilor Lyon seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY CHARTER

The Charter Review Committee submitted their final report to the city council which included recommended amendments to the Charter.

Manager Morris shared the election timeline for the General Election in November of 2025. He also shared that if the council chose to recommend the Charter Amendments be on the November ballot it would run approximately \$5,700 as Umatilla County Elections can charge for elections in odd numbered years. If the measure was held off until the Primary Election in May of 2026, there would be no cost to the city.

Councilor Irving stated he was willing to delay the measure until May of 2026.

Councilor Lyon motioned to accept the Charter Review Committee’s final report. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilor Koklich being the only dissenting vote. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

Mr. Humbert wanted clarification that the council knew the Charter Amendments had to go to a vote of the people and the council could not just change the Charter.

The council stated that was correct.

Councilor Lyon motioned to direct staff to consult with the City Attorney on the drafting of a ballot measure for the recommended changes suggested by the Charter Review Committee as submitted for a future election. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

ADDITION OF AGENDA ITEM

RESOLUTION NO. 2580 - AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE TO AN ENGAGEMENT LETTER WITH BARRAN LIEBMAN, LLP FOR LEGAL SERVICES

Councilor Irving requested to add an item to the agenda. The agenda item was for an engagement letter for legal services with Barran Liebman for employment reasons.

Mayor Odman stated engaging with this legal firm was at the advice of the city attorney. He stated there needed to be a majority consensus in order to add this item to the agenda.

There was a council consensus for the item to be added to the agenda.

Councilor Jensen asked if the vote for the engagement letter for the legal firm could wait until after the executive session.

Councilor Holden stated it would be wise to vote before going into an executive session.

Manager Morris stated voting on the engagement letter only secures retainage.

Councilor Irving stated this engagement letter was being voted on by council since they would be the ones using the firm. He announced that the City Manager has authority to approve contracts up to \$50,000 without them being taken to the council for approval.

Councilor Irving motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2580, Resolution Authorizing Signature to an Engagement Letter with Barran Liebman, LLP for Legal Services. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Youth Representatives Rodriguez and Lamb were in favor.

UPDATE – SEWER TREATMENT PLANT – RECOATING OF THE PRIMARY DIGESTER LID

Manager Morris stated he would like to schedule a Special Session meeting before the next Work Session of the council on August 25th for a bid award for the recoating of the primary digester lid. This would allow to follow all the pre-bidding rules for the project. The bid award could wait until the regular council meeting in September, but the two extra weeks would be nice to get the project started due to the project sensitivity to temperature.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the possible timeline.

Councilor Lyon asked if everything was alright with this digester being out of service.

Manager Morris stated everything needs inspected.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO APPROACH THE COUNCIL WITH ISSUES NOT ON THE AGENDA

Brad Humbert – 1813 Oak Street, stated he believed that a city employee lied to the city council about a fire truck that was for sale in College Place, Washington. Mr. Humbert said the truck sold for \$8,800 and that it passed a pump test. He told the council they have the right to fire department heads and they should use that right. He said the fire chief should be fired over the truck issue and that the city manager has known about it and has done nothing about it. He then asked the council if they received the wage survey for department heads that he asked for. Mr. Humbert stated again that the used fire truck passed a pump test and the truck was not even considered to be purchased by the city instead a volunteer firefighter was sent to look at a different truck which he considered a vacation for that volunteer. He said the fire chief is not doing his job because he is not going into the schools to check their fire extinguishers.

Megan Hoel stated when Mayor Odman and Councilor Holden ran for office last year, they both campaigned on transparency, public engagement, and restoring trust between the city and its citizens. She specifically stated what the Mayor said, ***“City Council and City Hall need to listen to what the community has to say and take action in the best interest of our community.”*** and Councilor Holden said, ***“The fastest way to repair trust is with timely, effective, and accurate communication.”*** Ms. Hoel stated they both pledged to encourage public participation, strengthen community pride, and keep open channels of communication between the council and the people. She has since seen limited public comment and unanswered emails. She stated she has heard of efforts to restrict other councilors from gathering input for the City Manager’s evaluation which she stated did not reflect the promises they made. She stated with the executive session scheduled on the agenda, she was concerned by reports that some councilors had made attempts to block others from gathering employee or public feedback ahead of this evaluation, and that there was talk of removing the item from the agenda entirely. She believed that performance reviews were not just a formality, but were a critical tool for showing accountability and improvement, and they cannot be credible if

they are stripped of honest, broad-based input. She said the council has pledged transparency and public engagement and asked that those commitments be honored, and ensure the process was conducted lawfully, thoroughly, and with integrity.

Judy Kelley – 94 Powell Road, stated they have a disturbance in her neighborhood, her husband Chris Mitchell spoke for her. He said one of their neighbors has caused a disturbance and has dug out some material close to their fence and they are concerned about it. He said there is a city owned strip of land that abuts their property and they have been taking care of the weeds, spraying and watering it. They are interested in purchasing the land and adding it to their property since they already maintain it.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the city owned property as well as the alleged city property that was recently sold five years ago to a neighbor to use as a driveway.

Mr. Mitchell said his neighbor is just doing what he wants to do with the city property.

Manager Morris said he will be contacting that neighbor to inform him he needs to put the city property back to the state it was, over time the hole that was created could erode the fence.

Councilor Holden clarified with Ms. Kelley and Mr. Mitchell that what they were asking for was for the property to be put back the way it was and to come to some type of resolution on who is to maintain that property.

Mr. Mitchell, stated yes.

Doug Venn of Prescott, Washington asked when was the results of the pool operation being presented.

Manager Morris shared he was having the pool manager come to the September 8th council meeting to give a brief presentation on the pool season and lessons learned.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Morris stated the last day of the pool was August 23, 2025 and that he has asked the pool manager to do a brief presentation at the September 8th council meeting. He reported the tennis court project has not started yet. There was no funding received from the legislature this year and the project cost is more than originally thought. The plan going forward was to continue looking for funding sources and there was going to be an attempt to crack seal the cracks for now. The Milton-Freewater Rotary Club has committed some funding for the project. He announced the League of Oregon Cities Annual Conference was October 2 – 4, 2025 in Portland. He is planning to attend and asked that if any councilor was interested to contact him. During the conference, at the business meeting, there needs to be a voting delegate. He said if a councilor goes to the conference, then they can vote, otherwise he can do it. Freewater park fence post holes have been dug and the mulch for the playground should be in by the end of the week. He will be missing the September 22nd work session, if there is one scheduled, as he is going to be on vacation from September 20th – 30th, he is going back to Florida for his dad's 80th birthday.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Koklich said he believed there was good participation at the pool this year.

Mayor Odman said he has heard a lot of good things about the pool and that Russ was a good hire.

Councilor Holden stated that Erica Miller has been wonderful as well.

Manager Morris said that Krista Gannon has helped out and that Russ was amazing.

The Mayor called for a five-minute break at 8:48 p.m., the council return to session at 8:59 p.m.

The council adjourned to executive session at 8:59 p.m. pursuant to 192.660 (2) (h) to consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

The council adjourned to executive session at 9:17 p.m. pursuant to 192.660 (2) (i) to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer and any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing.

The council returned to open session at 9:57 p.m.

Mayor Odman stated the litigation will be handled by the City Manager. He then recommended that the city manager evaluation be postponed until September 8, 2025 based on advice of legal counsel.

There was a council consensus to postpone the city manager's evaluation until September 8, 2025.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

Mike Odman, Mayor