
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

January 12, 2026

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met in regular session on Monday, January 12, 2026 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8th Avenue at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Council President Steve Irving, Councilors Wes Koklich, John Lyon, Emily Holden and Destiny Jensen arriving at 7:03 p.m.

Mayor Mike Odman and Councilor Jose Garcia were absent.

Staff members present were: Interim City Manager Tim Johnson, City Recorder Leanne Steadman, Finance Director Laurie Bubar, Fire Chief Shane Garner, Electric Superintendent Richard Jolly, Public Works Engineering Technician Steven Patten, Conservation Specialist Ryan Westman and Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon.

Guests and citizens present were: Julie Culjak, Reilly Miller, Laurel Estes, Larry Estes, Sally Babcock, Donna Sheridan, Paul Seaquist, Tammy Seaquist, Arlen Calley, Kyndahl Calley, Kay West, Kate York, George Gillette, Tina Kain, Kelly Hahn, Carolyn Hahn, Corky York and John Wells of Anderson Perry.

Representing the news media were: Sherrie Widmer of the Valley Herald via conference phone and Sheila Hagar of the East Oregonian.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Regular Session Minutes from December 8, 2025
- Approval of 5-year Progress update for the City's Water Management and Conservation Plan

In reference to the 5-year Progress update for the City's Water Management and Conservation Plan, Councilor Holden asked what the calculated water loss looked like for other cities.

Public Works Engineering Technician Steven Patten stated the industry standard's goal is 10%, but most cities are above that, in that 15, 20, 25 percent range. Some cities are as high as 50% and some cities are in single digits and meeting the bench mark.

Councilor Lyon motioned to approve all items on the Consent Calendar. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Councilor Jensen was not present for the vote.

PRESENTATION ITEM:

WATER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

John Wells of Anderson Perry explained the purpose of a Water System Master Plan is to develop a water system design criteria for the planning periods; evaluate the adequacy of the existing water supply; storage, and distribution systems; evaluate alternatives for improving the City's water system; and develop a financial plan for implementing the recommended improvements. In a power point presentation, he showed several maps that outlined city limits and the Urban Growth Boundary, system pressure zones, fire hydrant target capacities for residential, commercial, industrial and institutional areas, and south hill pressure zone improvements. At his presentation in October to the council, he stated he also spoke about the design criteria and some of the planning that would go on for the water system plan. Also included in that discussion was projected population and planning for that in the design. He spoke about fire hydrant gallons per minute for residential and commercial. He then showed a map that indicated some areas with low capacity that have dead end lines or have small lines or a combination of both. Mr. Wells said that when they get into the fixes, which is what he'll work on next, these are the priority areas. He then explained the city's system has three different pressure zones; the south, middle and northern reservoirs. There were maps that he showed that illustrated where the lowest pressures were in the city. He said in looking at the southern end of town, one of the things that they did in looking at the modeling is the reservoir. There's also a well and a booster station included in the modeling, which would supply water above that reservoir. The booster station would be needed in the future to be able to supply water to this area and as part of that, long range planning, for that area's future growth, a second half-million-gallon reservoir would be looked at, which gives you the redundancy in the backup for that area. He recommended this being done in a phased approach.

Councilor Lyon asked if a two-million-gallon tank should be placed where the half-million-gallon tank would be proposed.

Mr. Wells stated that when you're building systems, you build them in phases and incrementally. To build that reservoir on the south end of town would require approximately a mile of pipe to get it to the proposed location. He believed there were other priorities to be improved before the second reservoir in that area. He again, showed areas in town with low pressures and explained their thought behind some of the reasons for highlighting these problem areas and they recommended that being the priority. Then they are looking at the long-range planning forecast. Mr. Wells stated they wanted to be sure that council agreed with the direction they were going, which would be to prioritize the pressure zones in town then prioritize the remaining by a ranking system of where they are in the system. They would come up with cost-estimates and then put all those in the plan.

Councilor Lyon stated he recalled that the middle reservoir needed to be replaced, and that it was going to be a concrete two-million-gallon reservoir.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the reservoir condition, the last time it was dove in 2017 and inspected. It was noted that it would be a good idea to have it checked again the next year or two to see if there's been changes.

Councilor Lyon asked Mr. Wells if he recommended starting on the middle reservoir as a priority.

Mr. Wells replied, probably, because it is a high need. He said there are some smaller projects that could be completed too. He said that is part of the strategy to look at and prioritize. The middle

reservoir, the coating is coming off and there's been some spalling of the concrete. It is old, it's from the 1950s and so it's showing its age.

Councilor Lyon asked if there was a State of Oregon mandate for diving a reservoir.

Mr. Wells stated no, there was no specific criteria you have to meet. One of the things they were looking at was getting the new reservoirs' elevation up a little bit to help solve some of the pressure issues at the upper end of the zone.

Councilor Lyon asked how much more elevation would it take to increase the pressure to a desirable amount.

Mr. Wells stated every 2.3 feet of vertical, gets you one PSI, so twenty feet would be adequate.

Councilor Lyon stated at the last council meeting they were presented with an aquifer storage recharge project. He asked how that fit into this study.

Mr. Wells said an aquifer storage recharge (ASR) is another asset to a water system master plan.

Councilor Lyon asked where Mr. Wells thought an ASR would fit into the priority.

Mr. Wells said he thought it was a little bit lower than emergency. He said there's concern, but there might be some others things that have a higher priority or that may not cost a large amount to solve. He said they will put a priority list together, then take back to council to talk about. If council wants to shift the priorities around then that can be done, then it's a matter of funding.

Councilor Lyon asked if there was funding for some of these projects.

Mr. Wells said that there were budget funds for some of it now. He recommended continuing with coming up with all the items, and getting them all down on paper then come up with a priority list that the council can review. He anticipated having something for the council in approximately three months.

Councilor Lyon asked if the ASR would be included in that list.

Mr. Wells stated it would be.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

REQUEST – KIWANIS CLUB OF MILTON-FREEWATER REQUESTING AN EXEMPTION TO CITY CODE 8-2-19 TO ALLOW ALCOHOL IN YANTIS PARK FOR THEIR FUNDRAISING EVENT MAY 2026

Kiwanis President Ryan Westman requested an exemption to City Code 8-2-19 to allow alcohol in Yantis Park for their 5th annual Kiwanis Summer Kickoff Beer & Wine Festival. He said Kiwanis strives to improve the world one child and one community at a time. Their club fulfills that mission by awarding college scholarships to local high school students, sponsors student travel to educational and civic leadership events, hosts annual youth activities such as the Easter egg hunt and community scavenger hunt, provides clothing donations to Gib Olinger and Central Middle School, contributed to projects like the Pioneer Disc Golf Course at Marie Dorian Park, and supports the local Bread

Basket food pantry through free rent. The event is scheduled for May 16, 2026 from 4:00-9:00 p.m. at Yantis Park and they were once again striving for a family friendly event.

Councilor Holden recused herself, disclosing she was hired by the Kiwanis Club to do their marketing.

Councilor Lyon motioned to approve the Milton-Freewater Kiwanis Club request for an exemption to City Code 8-2-19, allowing them to lawfully sell and consume alcohol in Yantis Park for their fundraising event. Councilor Koklich seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilor Jensen being the dissenting vote and Councilor Holden recusing herself from the discussion and vote due to reason disclosed above.

APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES; PLANNING COMMISSION, LIBRARY BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE

In February of each year, staggered terms of the City advisory committees expire. A press release was published in the newspaper of record, the Valley Herald. The press release was also posted on city hall bulletin boards as well as posted on the City website and social media page. There were five applications received and all five were being recommended to be appointed. Mayor Odman had made the following recommendations for appointments and Council President Irving concurred. The following recommendations were made: for the Planning Commission, Tucker Stringham 4-year term, Margo Piver, 4-year term and Reilly Miller 3-year term, for the Budget Committee, Julie Culjak 3-year term, and to the Library Board – Laurel Estes, 4-year term.

Councilor Lyon motioned to appointment Tucker Stringham to the Planning Commission for a 4-year term, Margo Piver to the Planning Commission for a 4-year term, Reilly Miller to a 3-year term, Laurel Estes to the Library Board for a 4-year term and Julie Culjak to the Budget Committee for a 3-year term. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

City Recorder Leanne Steadman introduced the new committee members who were in the audience which were, Julie Culjak, Reilly Miller and Laurel Estes.

RESOLUTION NO. 2587, CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR GOLF COURSE CONCESSION FRANCHISE AGREEMENT

City Recorder Leanne Steadman presented a request received from George Gillette who holds the Golf Course Concession Franchise Agreement. Mr. Gillette has held this franchise for 51 plus years. Mr. Gillette was asking for an extension of that contract for six more months expiring December 31, 2026. The extension would provide continuity for the entire 2026 golfing season instead of a change in management during the busiest time of the year. It would also allow for him to bring in inventory to the Pro Shop with the ability to sell the merchandise through the end of the year.

Council President Irving thanked Mr. Gillette, who was in the audience, for all his dedicated years.

Mr. Gillette said he appreciated being allowed to do so.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2587, Resolution Authorizing the Interim City Manager's Signature to a six-month contract extension beginning July 1, 2026 for the Golf Course Concession Franchise Agreement with George Gillette expiring December 31, 2026. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2588, LEASE AGREEMENT EXTENSION FOR SHANGRI-LA SALON AND BOUTIQUE

City Recorder Leanne Steadman presented a request from Jeanne LaMon who does business as Shangri-La Salon & Boutique which is located in the Carnegie Library building. Ms. LaMon has held this lease since 2005, her current agreement expires January 31, 2026. She has requested a four-year extension, but Interim City Manager Tim Johnson is comfortable with proposing a one-year extension which will allow the new city manager, once hired, time to negotiate future years. Ms. LaMon has taken it upon herself to recommend an increase in her rent. Currently, her rent is \$625 per month plus utilities and she recommended raising it to \$700 per month plus utilities. This is a 12% increase.

Councilor Holden inquired about the basement portion of the building that was referred to as the city gym.

Ms. Steadman stated it was an area that was designated for a city gym and the equipment in the gym, had been donated by city employees.

There was an announcement from the audience that there was also a masseuse located in the basement which was something that Ms. LaMon manages.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2588, Resolution Authorizing Signature to a Lease Agreement Extension with Jeanne LaMon doing business as Shangri-La Salon & Boutique located in the Carnegie Library Building. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TRAINING – FEMA NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Interim City Manager Tim Johnson presented required training of him as City Manager, and the city council. He stated this was part of the National Incident Management system under FEMA and they take this very seriously. If the training is not completed, the city's insurance premiums will increase. He said it was important for the council to understand and it's significant in the context that it is not related to what staff goes through, but what the council needs to go through as it relates to how they handle an actual event or incident, what is expected of them. Mr. Johnson stated he would take the training alongside the council, which the training is 3 ½ hours long. Part of the training requirements is taking a test. If you fail the test, you have to take the training all over again. That is one of the reasons why he suggested that they all work together on the training. He reported there was no impact to the budget, as the training was free. He suggested this training to happen in May as there were other pressing priorities right now.

Councilor Lyon made a recommendation for the Mayor, Council and Interim City Manager complete the IS-700 NIMS and Introduction to Incident Command online training. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2589, CALLING AN ELECTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY CHARTER

City Recorder Leanne Steadman presented a resolution, which called for an election for the purpose of approving amendments to the City Charter. She explained this was the final action required by the city council to move the recommended City Charter amendments made by the Charter Review Committee and adopted by the council, to the ballot for the Primary Election to be held on May 19, 2026. The resolution included the Caption; Amendments to the City of Milton-Freewater City

Charter, the Question; Shall the City of Milton-Freewater City Charter be Amended, along with the Summary of the major changes being proposed.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2589, A Resolution Calling an Election for the Purpose of Approving Amendments to the City Charter. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

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

Carolyn Hahn, 250 Powell Road – reported she had made a report to the police department dispatch regarding a trailer parked on North Main across from Freewater School that people appeared to be going in and out of daily. She stated she never got a call back and hasn't seen any indication that anything has been done about it. She also reported there is a motorhome next to a house that people are living in. She alleged that there is no sewer or water hooked up to this motorhome. She claimed that both entrances to Milton-Freewater were looking bad and asked what can be done about it. She offered to ride with the Code Enforcement Officer to show him places around her neighborhood that have fifteen to twenty cars in their yard and backyard and there are vehicles without current licenses. She shared a time when she was ticketed for not having a current license and it cost her \$1,000. She then asked about 115 N Main Street and said they keep adding more garbage and trailers. She stated she felt nothing was being done and this was just being allowed. She stated the city has provided big garbage containers for the property across the street, but she doesn't get any free garbage. She is a grandma and wouldn't want her grandkids coming into this area.

Interim City Manager Tim Johnson stated the issue with the North Main address has been brought to his attention. There was a recent meeting with members of the planning department, building official, police department, code enforcement and city recorder regarding this. He said in Oregon, we are handicapped by the laws that the legislature has passed. The League of Oregon cities has information on this topic that he will be providing staff. He reported there will be a weekly meeting and a meeting with the property owner has been schedule to try and get this resolved. He recommended the city joining the Code Enforcement Association which costs \$80 per year and will recommend for staff to start reaching out for their services once a member.

Councilor Koklich stated he spoke with the Mayor of Pendleton. The City of Pendleton took some actions with the homeless and camps. He said now they are in the middle of a lawsuit and they are consulting with attorneys that helped Grants Pass Oregon with their endeavors on their lawsuits about a year ago. He suggested getting a hold of the representatives and let them know there needs to be change.

Councilor Jensen asked if code enforcement was fining people.

Manager Johnson stated not at this point. He shared that he needed to understand with the city attorney whether the current code allows for that.

Councilor Irving said in the short period of time Mr. Johnson has been with the City, he has not been idle. He has been keeping the council well informed.

Sheila Hagar stated she drives by the area of NE 2nd, behind Terry's OK Tire, and she stated she sees a lot of open fires happening. She believes there are safety issues involved, and as people have been bringing this to the city's attention for years, why isn't it already known if the code upholds this and why hasn't this been put into place to be able to fine homeowners and property owners.

Manager Johnson replied that the laws are constantly changing. Cities are impacted by a law that was taken to the US Supreme Court as it pertains to the ability of homeless to rest upon a right-of-way. This law was challenged, supported and upheld in Supreme Court that constituted a whole series of different actions by cities large and small. He then referred to issues associated with encampments. The City of Grants Pass moved forward to the Appellate Court and lost. Case law is what they look at. They look at the issue, the rule, the outcome and then there is a defined conclusion. Then cities are confronted by having to interpret that and what that means for the community and what that means for city codes and when you have a smaller community, like Milton-Freewater, assets are minimal so you do the best you can. He stated that he was blessed that he was here right now to be able to help because of his very large city experience and also decades of experience to support the city in this effort. He shared the council wanted him to do work on a recruitment of the next city manager, but the management of the city is also illustrated a variety of different opportunities that are pending and that need to be addressed. He said he believed that the council has given him great leeway to address these issues as long as he reports back to them and seeks their advice and direction.

Julie Culjak asked if there has been any headway in getting a city ordinance on absentee landlords for empty commercial properties. There is a problem with that in this community where they are not taking responsibility and there are others that are doing their best to fill businesses on the Main Street District.

Manager Johnson stated that the City of Pendleton recently adopted policy to address this situation and they are now being challenged on it. He shared some of his knowledge on other cities and lawsuits. He recommended waiting and seeing what the outcome is for the City of Pendleton on this matter. He shared that his approach would be "honey" and felt Pendleton's approach was "sulfur". He would rather work to bring and attract people into the community. He reported he has already started talking with the Main Street people in town and is asking them what their interests are and what we the city can do to help. He said this is a wonderful community and there's a lot of opportunity here. By following the National Trust for Historic Preservations, Main Street philosophy of economic diversification, promotions, design and financing, he believed the community will be very successful. He shared you don't have to put a lot of money into it, but you can put a lot of attention to it, and once a new city manager is engaged, then embark on an economic development effort. He said there is a lot money available through grants so he recommended trying to figure out a community approach and how to go after this money and what to prioritize.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Johnson reported on the recent electric outage, which he provided a follow-up to the council. He thanked staff that was involved and stated the actions by staff were well choreographed. He shared details for each department during this time. He said the event raised a variety of questions for him which relates to being conscientious to those in a population that are impacted by frailty, and may need to have a welfare check. He shared the Census Bureau reports that 95% of the homes in Milton-Freewater have access to a computer and the internet. The dilemma is that leaves 5% out there that does not, but if the electricity's out, what good does it do.

He suggesting working together as a community to figure out how to address that issue to support the residents that need a welfare check. He has been studying Milton-Freewater and discovered that it's the 75th anniversary as a combined city of Milton and Freewater. He suggesting coming up with something fun to bring the community together because you only celebrate 75 years once. He asked for some thought to be given on some sort of celebration and let him know. What other cities have done to celebrate was then shared by Manager Johnson. He reported the field representatives from US Senators Merkley and Wyden's office want to meet with the council and talk about federal funding for water infrastructure improvements. This meeting may need to be in a couple different session as to not violate the public meetings law. He reported he will now be producing a manager's report every two weeks and the next time you see him, there will be two manager's reports. The reports will also be posted on the city website under the "City Manager's" page.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Irving shared that he had dinner at the Elks Lodge, which dinner time is open to the public, and it was like a Thanksgiving dinner. They served hot turkey sandwiches. The recommended donation price for dinner is \$5.00 or more. He said there was a good turnout at their annual crab feed.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

APPROVED FEBRUARY 9, 2026

Mike Odman, Mayor