
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 Mayor
John Lyon Ward 1
Emily Holden Ward 2
Jose Garcia Ward 3

CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER**February 9, 2026****CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met in regular session on Monday, February 9, 2026 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, Jose Garcia, Steve Irving, Emily Holden and Destiny Jensen via conference phone.

Staff members present were: Interim City Manager Tim Johnson, City Recorder Leanne Steadman, Finance Director Laurie Bubar, Fire Chief Shane Garner, Library Director Lili Schmidt, Electric Superintendent Richard Jolly, Public Works Engineering Technician Steven Patten, Conservation Specialist Ryan Westman, Facilities Maintenance Worker Jorge Estrada, Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon and Court Clerk Tracy Martinez.

Guests and citizens present were: Annie Pankratz, Kay West, Donna Sheridan, David Prock, Paul Seaquist, Tammy Seaquist, George Gillette, Jon Mendez, Danny Sanchez, Randy Reese, John Mitchell, Tina Kain, Gordan Hall, Kate Winters and Elionay Meneses.

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 January 12, 2026
- Library Board Minutes from August 28, 2025
- Recreation Committee Minutes, June 2, 2025
- Recreation Committee Minutes, December 3, 2025

Councilor Irving motioned to approve all items on the Consent Calendar. Councilor Garcia seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION ITEMS:**RECREATION COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Chair of the Recreation Committee George Gillette stated the committee was requesting to change their standard meeting date from the first Tuesday of each month to the third Tuesday of each month. Mr. Gillette alleges that the city council has not been receiving their minutes and the council has no idea what the committee is working on. He said by changing when they meet, that would allow for the minutes to be included with the city council packet. He reported the committee was working on getting the pool ready, they have not heard from the Little League group this year on their request for the season, the tennis courts still needed to be addressed, the Park and Recreation Master Plan is due for a review and/or update. He shared there have been upgrades to Yantis Park, Freewater Park and upgrades were coming soon for Marie Dorian Park.

Mayor Odman thanked and introduced the Recreation Committee members that were present; George Gillette, Ryan Westman, Kate Winters, Danny Sanchez and John Mitchell. He also stated that it was a great idea on the minutes.

Mayor Odman then asked Interim City Manager Tim Johnson what the update was on the aquatic center.

Interim City Manager Tim Johnson stated he sent a memo to the Parks and Recreation Committee today, February 9th regarding activities related to the golf course. He said it's time to gear up for pool staff and he sees no changes from last year, but it will be a tight year for staff, as it's the most difficult to recruit for.

Councilor Holden asked if the pool leadership was coming back this season.

Manager Johnson said he is in conversations.

Sheila Hagar suggested to attract college students, for citizens to make an offer of free housing. She said if you can cut out that expense for a college student, there might be a greater interest. She said she has a guest room that's ready to go.

There was a consensus among the council to allow the Parks and Recreation Committee to change their standard meeting day from the first Tuesday, to the third Tuesday.

PATRIOTIC PARTY IN THE PARK – 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION

City staff received a request from a representative of an informal local group known as "Patriotic Party in the Park" to be on the city council agenda. They submitted a letter to the city council requesting permission to use Yantis Park and the area behind the Milton-Freewater Golf Course for community fireworks display as part of a 4th of July celebration. As part of their request, they are also requesting permission to use the park and designated fireworks area until 11:00 p.m., and approval of a one-night waiver of the ban on aerial fireworks. Other events listed in their letter were a glow-in-the-dark parade, family fun vendors, a community car show, Rural Fire Department splash, etc.

There was no one present to present their requests.

Manager Johnson reviewed a memo that was provided to the city council as well as the representative of the "Patriotic Party in the Park" group. The letter was made up of questions raised by city staff for the event. The questions and requirements were: (1) will the fireworks display be conducted by a licensed professional pyrotechnics company, (2) the community group would be required to obtain insurance, naming the City as additionally insured, (3) be required to provide a detailed plan on how to address any errant fire caused by the fireworks, (4) be required to provide a detailed plan for cleanup including fireworks debris and garbage, (5) be required to provide evidence of receiving input if not approval from surrounding property owners and address their concerns, and (6) be required to work with the office of the City Manager to address issues with legal compliance, safety, logistics and feasibility from their request associated with state laws and city codes. He also shared that he spoke with M-F Golf Pro George Gillette and he suggested the use of the golf courses fifth hole for setting off the fireworks.

Councilor Koklich shared his time and experience when he was a member of the Milton-Freewater Junior Chamber International also known as Jaycees.

Councilor Holden motioned to request the group known as, “Patriotic Party in the Park” work with the Office of the City Manager to plan for this event. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

MID-YEAR REPORT – FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE CITY AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2025.

Manager Johnson presented a mid-year financial report. In summary, he reported the approved budget is \$47,816,457, generally, all fund budgets are within expected values as of December 31, 2025. The general fund revenues are on track to meet forecast, while funds vary, none are in danger of overrun. His presentation consisted of pie charts, bar charts and percentage year-to-date for the general fund. The budget timeline was presented along with the projected meeting and training dates. Those dates have been identified as April 27th, 28th and 29th. April 27th would be training on the fiduciary responsibility of the budget committee presented by Manager Johnson, with the 28th and 29th as being budget committee meetings. He reported the audit for fiscal year 2025 was complete and there were no findings reported. He noted there were some changes that needed to be made in the document itself, verbiage only, no numbers that he saw. This brought him to his recommendations which were; to formulate an audit committee, establish reserve policies for the general fund and city wide, establish a fleet management policy, an investment portfolio, monetization of services and grant management policy and tracking. He also recommended updating the system development charges to better reflect the true costs to the city.

A brief discussion ensued.

Manager Johnson requested that the city council adopt the report findings as he presented.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt the report findings presented by Interim City Manager Tim Johnson. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

AWARD OF PROPOSAL FOR RECRUITING SERVICES FOR EXECUTIVE POSITION OF CITY MANAGER AND PUBLIC WORKS SUPERINTENDENT

Manager Johnson stated the city manager recruitment was on time with his schedule and as of Friday, February 6, 2026 there were four proposals submitted. Those who submitted were SGR (Strategic Government Resources), Alliance Resource Consulting LLC, Jensen Strategies, and Prothman. He shared that none of the proposals came back with pricing for a hybrid model for the city manager recruitment.

Mayor Odman asked for clarification if this was for the city manager and public works superintendent.

Manager Johnson stated it was for the city manager. One company offered to do a full recruitment for the public works superintendent for \$11,000. Others ranged from \$11,000 - \$31,000. Manager Johnson stated the all-in price with Jensen Strategies was \$37,000 and they would discount their price by \$3,000 if they were chosen for both recruitments. He stated that price, did not include candidate travel. He shared that he expected to see 20 to 50 candidates.

Mayor Odman asked if there was a timeline listed for Jensen Strategies.

Manager Johnson stated the end of May.

Manager Johnson suggested the council authorize and direct him to negotiate with Jensen Strategies and SGR for their best and final price.

Councilor Lyon motioned to approve recommendation to discuss with the firms and direct the Interim City Manager to work with the two firms to determine their last and final offer from SGR and Jensen Strategies and to report to City Council. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

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

Elionay Meneses shared a program offered in Spanish, sponsored by Sherwood Trust and RDI (Rural Development Initiatives) “Empower Your Leadership: Rural Community Leadership Program” a course designed to empower emerging and established leaders, providing the tools and knowledge needed to make a difference in rural communities. The classes included lunch, childcare, and a small stipend for time spent. To sign up call 541-274-9691, classes begin March 28th.

Ryan Westman asked if there was going to be an English program offered.

Mr. Meneses said not right now.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Johnson reported he submitted two managers reports of which were part of the city council packet and will be posted on the city website under the “City Manager” tab.

City Recorder Leanne Steadman shared two Local Budget Law trainings for elected officials. One is being offered by the Department of Revenue. This training is split into three separate days in March and are all virtual. The second training is offered by the LOC (League of Oregon Cities) and is scheduled for February 26th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. virtual as well.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Odman announced the Milton-Freewater 2026 State of the City Address will be held Tuesday, February 24, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the McLoughlin High School Auditorium, “A tale of Two Cities: Honoring Our Past, Building Our Future”.

Councilor Koklich reported he had invited Manager Johnson to a Kiwanis meeting for lunch and he got a lot of positive feedback, and they have invited him back.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

APPROVED 3/9/2026

Mike Odman, Mayor