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**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

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**CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER**

**March 9, 2026**

**CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met in regular session on Monday, March 9, 2026 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Mike Odman, Councilors Emily Holden, Steve Irving, Wes Koklich, John Lyon and Destiny Jensen arrived at 7:23 p.m.

Councilor Jose Garcia was 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, Facilities Maintenance Worker Jorge Estrada, Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon and Public Works Supervisor Nathan Lyon.

Guests and citizens present were: David Prock, Kay West, Charlet Hotchkiss, Tierney Cimmiyotti, Paul Seaquist, Tammy Seaquist, Jennifer LeBlanc, Cindy Timmons, Sally Babcock, Carl Wheeler, Laurel Estes, Donna Sheridan, Rick Curry, Lorenda Curry, Leslie Curry, Cecil Shippentower, Alexa Shippentower, Danny Sanchez, Abe Currin, Ben Currin and Tina Kain via conference phone.

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

**CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:**

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Regular Session Minutes from February 9, 2026
- January 2026 Financial Reports
- Recreation Committee Minutes, January 20, 2026

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

**PRESENTATION ITEM:**

**UPDATE – HIGHWAY 11 SAFETY COMMITTEE IN MILTON-FREEWATER AND ODOT TSO SAFETY GRANT**

Charlet (Charly) Hotchkiss, Umatilla County Land Use Planner and County Transit Coordinator provided an update on the Highway 11 Safety Committee, but before she did that, she provided a little background. In December of 2023, Representative Greg Smith, hosted a Town Hall Meeting in Milton-Freewater to address the community’s concerns regarding the safety of Highway 11 and the recent high number of fatal and serious injury crashes along OR-11 between Milton-Freewater

and Stateline. In response to the community concerns heard at the town hall, Umatilla County Staff in partnership with Oregon Department of Transportation worked together on a community-led Safety Outreach project that could receive funding through the ODOT TSO Safety Grant program. Grant funding was awarded halfway through the 2023-2024 grant cycle and the Highway 11 Safety Focus Committee was formed. The funding has been awarded to Umatilla County for the last three grant cycles, and another grant application was submitted for the 2026-2027 grant cycle. The funding goes towards local messaging campaigns to promote positive behaviors that will make OR11 safer, as well as provides additional funding for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office to increase their presence within the Highway 11 corridor through additional overtime shifts. She stated her purpose of being at the council meeting was to grow the attendance at the local meetings and increase the membership of the group. Highway 11 Safety Committee Meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Milton-Freewater Police Station. The meetings are open to the public and she shared if anyone was interested in being added to the invite list to contact her at 541-278-6283 or by sending her an email at [charlet.hotchkiss@gmail.com](mailto:charlet.hotchkiss@gmail.com). In closing she showed a one-minute video that was made by and for the Milton-Freewater community.

Umatilla County Commissioner Cindy Timmons asked if there was an update from ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation) on the Highway 11 project.

Ms. Hotchkiss stated she worked for Umatilla County and not ODOT, but shared when there is an update or plans, ODOT would share that information.

### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 2590, AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT FROM OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Public Works Engineering Technician Steven Patten shared that the City had limited funding to update and improve parks and recreation services. Recreational facilities were aging, requiring costly repairs or replacement. Many of the facilities also need improved accessibility for all citizens to utilize them. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department operates a Local Government Grant (LGG) program to help local governments fund public parks, recreation areas, and facilities. The grants require at least a 40% match based on Milton-Freewater's population. The proposed project would be to replace the tennis courts at Yantis Park. Improvements would include the removal of the existing courts and the installation of four new tennis courts with fencing and lighting. The 40% match can be a combination of cash, labor, equipment, materials/supplies, and other funding. The grant would span at least two fiscal years. Proposed match funding would come from local option tax monies and other grant funding secured for this project. He reported that staff was currently applying to other grant organizations such as Wildhorse, MF Area Foundation, Oregon Community Fund, Ford Family Foundation and Eurus Foundation. The proposed Tennis Court Project is expected to cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000. With this project budget, the City's match requirement would be \$160,000 to \$200,000.

Mayor Odman asked if pickleball would be able to be played on the new tennis courts.

Mr. Patten stated it depended on which grants are sought as some would be restrictive to only tennis. He said he will reach out to the high school athletic director and ask if pickleball lines on a tennis court would interfere with tennis matches.

Councilor Lyon said he thought he remembered Freewater Park having a pickleball court in the most recent upgrade.

Mr. Patten stated that was correct. The lines will be painted for pickleball, but there will not be a net as that space will be used for basketball and soccer. When someone wants to play pickleball, they would need to bring a portable net.

Councilor Lyon asked about the local option tax.

Mr. Patten stated this was the second year of the second 5-year local option tax measure.

A brief discussion ensued.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2590, Resolution Authorizing Application for a Local Government Grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Councilor Holden seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Councilor Jensen was not present for vote.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2591, MAKE APPROPRIATIONS DUE TO UNFORESEEN REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES REGARDING A CIS GRANT**

Finance Director Laurie Bubar reported Police Chief Joe Shurtz sought out funding to help with the purchasing of body worn cameras for the police department. The Chief found, applied for, and was awarded through City County Insurance Services (CIS) The Public Safety Grant – Body Worn Camera. The awarded funding was in the amount of \$10,000 which helps offset a portion of the total project cost of \$104,711. These funds were not included in the FY26 budget, as at the time of creating the budget, this grant opportunity was unknown. The presented changes are necessary to comply with Oregon Budget Law taking into consideration unanticipated revenues or expenditures that have taken place within the current budget year.

Councilor Lyon asked if there was a policy on the new body cameras.

Ms. Bubar stated there was.

Councilor Lyon requested the council receive a copy of the policy.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2591, Resolution to Make Appropriations due to Unforeseen Revenues and Expenditures. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Councilor Jensen was not present for vote.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2592, ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR JUNE 30, 2025**

Finance Director Laurie Bubar reported the city's contracted audit firm is Anderson, Boylan, Ramos, P.C. located in Hermiston, Oregon. This is the first year of a three-year contract. She reported the FY25 (fiscal year 2025) audit was a good and clean audit, showing no material weaknesses, or significant findings. She did report there were a few overspent funds. The City's net position as of June 30, 2025 was \$47,496,223. This is a decrease of \$494,083 from the prior year,

and has been mainly due to the increase in personal services and material services. She said this change in net position is something she will continue to monitor. Auditing services are required by Oregon Budget Law, and is budgeted for in each fiscal year's budget. The ACFR (Annual Comprehensive Financial Report) is compiled by the audit firm upon completion of the audit process. Proposed services have been budgeted within the general fund, account and billing department. The audit report has been submitted to the State of Oregon within the timeline and accepted. She said if there were any question regarding the ACFR to email her the questions and she'd be happy to answer them. She also announced that the ACFR would be posted on the city website under the finance department page.

Councilor Irving asked if there were any funds underspent.

Ms. Bubar replied, yes there were.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2592, Resolution Authorizing Signature to Accept the Completed Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL TO PURCHASE ONE USED TELEHANDLER**

Public Works Supervisor Nathan Lyon and Public Works/Project Aid Krista Gannon requested approval to purchase a used telehandler which was included in the FY26 budget in the amount of \$60,000. The telehandler will be used to reach irrigation pivots for maintenance and to empty and move around recycling containers at the County Road recycling depot. The departments lead senior mechanic and Mr. Lyon inspected the vehicle in Richland, Washington and were confident that it would serve as needed. The vehicle is used and would be purchased "as-is" with no warranty. Staff proposed at a future date to purchase a two-person OSHA approved basket for tree trimming valued at \$1,100. Staff recommended purchasing a used Genie Model GTH-636 Telehandler 6000-pound 34-36-foot lift for \$51,500 with a \$500 delivery fee to be delivered to the city shop for a total of \$52,000.

Councilor Lyon asked what year was the telehandler.

Mr. Lyon replied, 2017.

Councilor Koklich asked if it had an hour meter on it.

Mr. Lyon stated it did. There was 1,600 hours on the meter, the meter was replaced and it has 1,300 on the current meter, so the vehicle has just under 3,000 hours.

Mayor Odman asked if the city had a telehandler now.

Mr. Lyon replied, no.

Councilor Holden asked what was the estimated life span of the telehandler.

Ms. Gannon said it would have a fifteen-year depreciation schedule.

Councilor Lyon motioned to approve the purchase of one used Genie Model GTH-636 Telehandler from Herc Rentals located in Richland, Washington in the total amount of \$52,000 to be delivered

to the City Shop Facility at 501 Lamb Street. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2593, AUTHORIZING SOLID WASTE FEES TO BE ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST QUARTER OF A DOLLAR DURING CLEAN-UP EVENTS AT THE LANDFILL**

Public Works Supervisor Nathan Lyon and Public Works/Project Aid Krista Gannon presented a resolution that would authorize solid waste fees to be rounded to the nearest quarter of a dollar during clean-up events at the landfill. The city offers two complimentary community clean-up events for refuse paying customers, one in the spring and one in the fall. In summary, appliances with compressors and/or refrigerant will be required to be dropped off at the County Road recycling depot and not the landfill, tire recycling will cost \$7.50 for each passenger/SUV tire, \$11.75 for each passenger truck tire. These costs would be paid at the landfill with cash only in bills no larger than \$20 bills during the event. For a more cost-effective way to get rid of tires, it was recommended to recycle tires at the time when new ones are being purchases. Staff recently checked with Milton-Freewater Les Schwab's and they charge \$4.99 per tire to recycle for passenger vehicles. Another change being recommended was the amount of the garbage weight allowed for free. Currently, the weight is 800 pounds and this is recommended being reduced to 500 pounds. Part of the reasoning behind this reduction is to stay in compliance with the daily tonnage allowance by DEQ and be able to continue offering these clean-up events.

A discussion ensued centered around tire recycling and the cost the city bourns for this service.

Councilor Koklich asked how will citizens be notified of these changes.

Ms. Gannon stated by flyers and tickets in their utility bills for the event.

Mayor Odman asked when the spring event was.

Ms. Gannon stated April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

Councilor Lyon asked if every vehicle was going to be weighed.

Mr. Lyon replied, no.

Councilor Jensen asked if the city had a tire shredder.

Ms. Gannon replied, no. She stated she was unsure of the whole process of turning tires into rubber mulch.

Interim City Manager Tim Johnson stated the problem with tires was that they pollute communities and could turn into a code enforcement issue. Staff was trying to be conscientious of cost and recommended approving what staff had recommended for changes.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2593, Resolution Authorizing Fees and Financial Requirements of Payment, cash only, with bills no larger than \$20 to be accepted and advertised in advance. Additionally, the refinement to the process of the requirement of requiring appliances with refrigerant/coolant and compressors be hauled as directed to the County Road Recycling Depot thus reducing the city's complimentary event waste load limit from 800 pounds to 500 pounds to

ensure state compliance and amend the rate for passenger/SUV tire rate to \$8.00 and passenger truck tire to \$12.00 which is rounded to the nearest dollar. Councilor Jensen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **RECOMMENDATION – RECRUITING AGENCY FOR CITY MANAGER SEARCH**

Interim City Manager Tim Johnson presented SGR (Strategic Government Resources, Inc.) recruitment services contract which is estimated at a not-to-exceed price of \$24,038 for selected services. He shared there were other services listed as “A La Carte Services” that would be in addition to the price if council desired and are largely priced per candidate. He said realistically there would potentially be 8 – 12 viable candidates for the city manager position. There were some items that he believed didn’t need to be redone, like the community outreach, as that had already been gone through with the most recent city manager recruitment.

Councilor Holden asked what the “media reports” was.

Manager Johnson stated he didn’t believe that was needed.

A brief discussion ensued.

Councilor Irving motioned to approve the contract with SGR as submitted on a not-to-exceed basis of 24,038. Councilor Koklich seconded the motion which passed with Councilor Jensen being the dissenting vote.

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

Ben Currin, 1025 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> – shared he is the Milton-Freewater Golf Course President. He stated former staff have done a tremendous job of maintaining the golf course and his concern is with all the changes with the city positions and future maintenance. He requested the continuance with what has been done in the past with regard to course maintenance. He said he appreciated the city council and staff’s support of the course and said the course looked great.

Councilor Koklich asked when the Golf Course meetings were.

Mr. Currin stated they hold the meetings at the Milton-Freewater Golf Course quarterly and it’s kept to the members of the board.

### **MANAGER’S REPORT**

Manager Johnson reported he submitted two managers reports, which were handed out the night of the council meeting. These reports covered the time period of February 1 – 15, and February 16-28, 2026. These reports will be posted on the city website under the “City Manager” tab. He reported on the SOTC (State of the City) Address which happened on February 24<sup>th</sup> at the McLoughlin High School Auditorium. He reported there being 325 people in attendance for the event. Along with that he reported the cost for holding the event was approximately \$3,000. He reported there has been an uptick in graffiti in town and he is working with CenturyLink on getting their equipment boxes cleaned up. He commended staff on their individual department infographics for the SOTC and said the information can continue to be used for other purposes and would be posted on the individual department pages on the city website. Mr. Johnson announced he provided the city council with a memo from him on the MFX, which was dated February 27, 2026. MFX in summary is a new approach in operation and deployment of city services. He reported there may

need to be budget adjustments due to the increase in fuel prices. Next, he reported the city manager recruitment was two weeks behind schedule and he estimated interviews being held the middle of May. He informed the council that they all were being signed up for the League of Oregon Cities Spring Conference in Pendleton, Oregon set for April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. In closing, he referenced his memo to the council dated March 9, 2026 which described grants that have been applied for by staff.

### **COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councilor Irving stated he appreciated Mr. Johnson's quick response to the graffiti issue.

Councilor Lyon referenced the mid-year report presented at the February 9<sup>th</sup> council meeting and asked why wasn't the enterprise funds broken out like the general fund was.

Mr. Johnson said the dilemma was pure time to get those broken down, and that was why he spoke about the general fund. He said some of the enterprise funds don't have a reserve amount big enough in the event of an emergency. He thanked Councilor Lyon for bringing this up and said when the mid-year report is done in the future it should include the enterprise funds. He then stated that the audit should not have been presented as it was. He said the audit should go to the council first and the community, comments from each should be incorporated into the audit, then it's given to council. It's not presented and handed to the council before that happens.

Mayor Odman commend Mr. Johnson for what he is doing for the city.

Ryan Westman asked for more details about the Mayor's presentation at the SOTC address where he announced there was going to be volunteer opportunities and asked for more information about MFX.

Mayor Odman stated he would provide more information at the upcoming work session.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:51p.m.

Adopted April 13, 2026

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Mike Odman, Mayor