



Department Head:	_____
Clerk/Treasurer:	_____
City Administrator:	_____
Mayor:	_____

COUNCIL REPORT

Business Item

Consent Agenda

Needs Legal Review:	No, unnecessary
Meeting Date:	December 20, 2023
Agenda Item:	2024 Legislative Priorities
Presented By:	Marla Keethler, Mayor

Action Required:

Determine council's legislative priorities before the 2024 session convenes in Olympia.

Motion for Business Item / Proposed Motion for Consent Agenda:

Motion to adopt White Salmon's 2024 Legislative Priorities as (listed herein)

Explanation of Issue:

Each year the City Council adopts Legislative Priorities in order to effectively advocate in a coordinated way for key issues or projects being pursued at the state level. These priorities are also used to prioritize state public hearings that the city may participate in regarding proposed legislation.

Included for reference are the Association of Washington Cities' 2024 Legislative Priorities. Typically the city council will endorse some or all of those same priorities. The city is not pursuing any special funding requests for the 2024 session, but does anticipate pursuing a request in the 2025 session for one of our identified "Community Center" projects (reference 2023 study completed by ARC Architects). The White Salmon Valley Metropolitan Park Pool District is pursuing a funding request in 2024, and in the past the city has joined their advocacy efforts in support of funding a new pool. In previous years the city has continued to identify the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Project as a legislative priority. Currently, Washington state has committed the most funding of all the project funding partners, and an additional new funding ask is not anticipated in 2024.

In the 2023 session, the City spoke in public hearings for legislation proposed to increase the 1% property tax limit, as well as affordable housing.

Council Options:

City Council has the following options available at this time:

1. Accept the Staff Recommendation.
2. Revise the Staff Recommendation.
3. Refer this issue back to staff for additional work.
4. Take No Action
5. Other action as desired by council.

Fiscal Analysis:

No fiscal impact to the legislative priorities. Money is allocated in the adopted 2024 budget to account for travel, if necessary, to Olympia by either the mayor, staff, or city council for advocacy.

Recommendation of Staff/Committee:

The administration supports all of AWC's 2024 Priorities, as well as advocating for the WSVMPD funding request. Additional areas of focus that seem beneficial would be to ask for continued funding for housing implementation/planning grants through Commerce, as well as programs like CHIP (Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program) to receive future funding cycles. Expanding access to affordable, quality childcare would also be a legislative priority that aligns with our adopted city priorities for 2024.

2024 City Legislative Priorities

Strong cities make a great state. Cities are home to 65% of Washington's residents, drive the state's economy, and provide the most accessible form of government. Cities' success depends on adequate resources and local decision-making authority to best meet the needs of our residents.

Washington's 281 cities ask the Legislature to partner with us and act on the following priorities:



Help recruit and retain police officers for public safety

Provide additional funding tools and resources for officer recruitment and retention to improve public safety. This includes updating the existing local option Public Safety Sales Tax to allow implementation by councilmanic authority and greater flexibility for using the funds to cover increased officer wages and related programs like behavioral health co-response teams.

Expand access to state-mandated training. In particular, continue increasing the number of classes for the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) and expanding the new regional academies. Getting new officers on the street faster supports recruitment and retention, thus improving public safety outcomes in our communities.



Revise the arbitrary property tax cap

Revise the arbitrary 1% property tax cap that has been in place for more than 20 years. Tie the tax to inflation and population growth factors with a new cap not to exceed 3%. This allows local elected officials to adjust the local property tax rate to better serve our communities and keep up with the costs of providing basic services like police, fire, streets, and valued community amenities like parks. The current 1% cap has created a structural deficit in cities' revenue and expenditure model, causing reliance on regressive revenues and artificially restricting the ability of property taxes to fund critical community needs.



Continue investing in infrastructure

Continue strong state investments in infrastructure funding to support operations and maintenance of traditional and non-traditional infrastructure like drinking water, wastewater, and broadband. Expand funding options that support state and local transportation needs with emphasis on preservation and maintenance to prevent expensive replacement and repairs. Improve access to Climate Commitment Act funding, including direct distributions, for city priorities that support carbon reduction and climate resiliency.



Provide behavioral health resources

Create greater access to behavioral health services to include substance use disorder treatment and dual diagnosis treatment facilities. Support continued state funding for cities to help communities establish alternative response programs like co-responder programs, diversion programs, and others that provide options beyond law enforcement to assist individuals experiencing behavioral health challenges.

AWC's advocacy is guided by these core principles from our Statement of Policy:

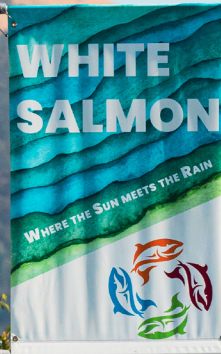
- Local decision-making authority
- Fiscal flexibility and sustainability
- Equal standing for cities
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Strong Washington state partnerships
- Nonpartisan analysis and decision-making

Contact: **Candice Bock**
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2023 PRIORITIES

In the interest of addressing critical local issues, we support the legislative efforts outlined below.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Modernizing and maintaining our aging water delivery system and streets is an increasing burden on our limited city budget. At the same time, the viability of our rural community also depends on strong **community** infrastructure: childcare, public transit, and multi-modal transit. We believe a focus on the below areas is key:

PRIORITIES

- White Salmon commends the Legislature for the passage of the **Move Ahead Washington (MAW)** package. As the Legislature begins implementation of MAW and considers future investments, the City requests that the funding provided for the **Hood River-White Salmon Bridge** be pushed forward as early as possible.

Why this bridge matters:



- Fully fund the **Public Works Assistance Account**, and expand state funding opportunities to assist with the **maintenance and operations of local infrastructure**.
- Strong infrastructure enables community growth and economic development. **Affordable access to quality childcare** is just as critical as functioning roads and water systems. We encourage increased income thresholds under the Working Connections Child Care plan, as well as new policy initiatives and **funding to support childcare providers and working families**.

White Salmon also supports the legislative priorities of the Association of Washington Cities.

OVERVIEW

A small community in a non-GMA county, White Salmon is not immune to the burdens felt by our urban neighbors, yet often struggles to access the same funding opportunities. Affordable housing, aging infrastructure, and funding for key local projects are necessary to ensure long-term resilience.

HOUSING

Our 2020 Urbanization Study showed that housing demand within western Klickitat County is expected to account for nearly 60% of the county's total demand for housing. A lack of buildable land and limited or no water/sewer infrastructure capacity in most of western Klickitat means White Salmon is confronting strong market interest & development pressure. We need diverse housing that includes affordable rental and ownership opportunities to ensure the long-term viability of our community, schools, and businesses.

- Provide additional **funding for subsidized housing** with relaxed grant requirements, and no GMA limitations.
- Provide additional funding for the **Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program**.

WSVPMPD POOL

The City continues to partner with the White Salmon Valley Pool Metropolitan Park District to realize construction of a new community pool. We support their **capital funding request** to ensure our residents (of which 38% are asset limited and income constrained) have access to learning a critical life-skill.



2022 IN REVIEW

Despite significant resources and time spent on rebuilding the administration's leadership and approach to providing services, the city still realized many key goals and objectives to move us closer to the 2040 vision outlined in our comprehensive plan - especially in the areas of infrastructure and housing.

PLANNING

The city emphasized strategic planning in 2022 to better prioritize the needed investments for improving capital and community infrastructure. This focus extended across all departments, from better emergency response considerations to parks and childcare.

WATER SYSTEM

The city successfully pursued two major loans from the state Public Works Board to implement needed water system improvements in 2023; these projects will support needed development and address system deficiencies. These projects account for a portion of the known \$21.9M in modernization efforts needed in the next 5 years.



*Project has an additional \$3.3M in USDA RD funding.



20-yr Outlook

In addition to near-term modernization projects estimated to cost nearly \$22M, an additional \$22.8M has been identified in projects needed before 2042 to support known growth.



SCADA

Implementing a comprehensive Supervisory Control and Acquisition System (SCADA) is a priority for 2023; this will not only improve response times but enhance system safety & security.

01

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Plan update est. Spring 2023 completion; TIB grant for nearly \$300k in chip/seal projects; multi-modal projects to enhance the new bridge identified for pursuit of WSDOT and RAISE funds.

02

PARKS SYSTEM

New plan adopted; identifies 5 acres in needed additional green space by 2043 as well as trail/recreation enhancements.

03

EMERGENCY RESPONSE: FIRE

Formed a citizen task force with KC FD 3 to do a cost/benefit analysis of consolidated services; est. Winter 2023 completion.

04

COMMUNITY CENTER

Conducting an evaluation of existing facilities to provide community needs, especially a new youth center location.

HOUSING

- Received \$25k through Dept. of Commerce to create a Housing Action Plan; estimated completion Spring 2023.
- Implemented new short-term rental regulations to support primary homeowners while discouraging investment home-ownership solely for STR purposes.
- Partnered with Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation to realize a CDBG grant for a Regional Housing Rehabilitation Program for low-income residents.
- Code revisions for planned developments to support diverse housing; additional housing code revisions planned for 2023.