



White Salmon City Council MEETING MINUTES

February 4, 2026 – 6:00 PM
119 NE Church Ave and Zoom Teleconference

Attendance:

Council Members:

David Lindley, Mayor Pro Tempore
Ben Giant (Zoom)
Patty Fink
Doug Rainbolt

Staff:

Shawn MacPherson, City Attorney (Zoom)
Erika Castro Guzman, City Clerk
Jennifer Neil, Director of Finance and Operations
Chris True, Director of Public Works
Rowan Fairfield, City Planner
Mike Hepner, Police Chief

I. Call to Order (6:00 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A total of ten members of the public were in attendance, both in person and via teleconference.

A. Land Acknowledgement (6:01 p.m.)

The Land Acknowledgement was delivered.

B. Presentation of the Flag (6:02 p.m.)

The Presentation of the Flag was conducted.

II. Roll Call (6:02 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order with all Council members present, constituting a quorum.

Moved by Patty Fink. Seconded by Ben Giant.

Move to excuse the absence of Council member Morella Mora from the February 4 City Council meeting.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

Giant – Aye, Fink – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Lindley – Aye.

III. Additions or Corrections to the Agenda (6:04 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley stated that staff circulated corrections of Consent Agenda Item C – Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement with Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Authority.

IV. Public Comment (6:04 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tem Lindley added into the record a written comment received from Open Gorge.

Steve Kingsford-Smith, Inside City Resident (6:05 p.m.)

Steve Kingsford-Smith spoke regarding his property at 716 NE Tohomish Street, purchased in 2015, and the denial of a variance request in 2021. He described site constraints and subsequent discussions with city staff, and stated his intent to request Council consideration of a right-of-way vacation and a Type D right-of-way use permit, noting that the request was submitted earlier that afternoon.

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Tammara Toppel, Mt Adams Chamber of Commerce (6:09 p.m.)

Tammara Toppel, on behalf of the Mt Adams Chambers of Commerce, apologized for an invoicing error related to the 2025 lodging tax funds, explaining that a completed invoice was unintentionally left in draft form and not submitted by the deadline. She requested Council consideration of a one-time budget adjustment to allow payment from the lodging tax fund already awarded and expended. She acknowledged the additional work required of staff, stated that invoicing procedures have been improved to prevent recurrence, and thanked the Council for its patience.

V. Presentation (6:11 p.m.)

A. Heritage Month Presentation (6:11 p.m.)

Council member Ben Giant acknowledged February as Black History Month, emphasizing the importance of recognizing Black history as American history and its relevance to all communities, including the Gorge. He noted the value of reflection and honoring contributions across industries and communities. He introduced a series of NPR StoryCorps vignettes, credited to a staff suggestion, to be played in recognition of Black History Month.

1. **The Family Equation** by StoryCorps:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKQI2ZCqw3s>
2. **Double Major | Father Figures** by StoryCorps:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmK8ROYiddA>
3. **Eyes on the Stars** by StoryCorps:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okF5UGpivR8>
4. **Miss Betty's Calling** by StoryCorps:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6e9vZEKbfVc&t=3s>

Councilor Giant stated that the City would continue recognizing Black History Month throughout February. He noted plans to host a speaker from Black in the Gorge at the next Council meeting and thanked staff for curating the videos and coordinating Black History Month posters and banners within the City.

B. City Highlights with the Mayor (6:24 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley noted that, in Mayor Marla Keethler's absence, he refers them to her two-week summary distributed earlier in the week and advised that any questions be directed to the mayor or her staff.

VI. Consent Agenda (6:24 p.m.)

- A. Acceptance of DWSRF Loan – Transmission Main Phase 2B**
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes - January 21, 2026**
- C. Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement – Hood River–White Salmon Bridge Authority**
- D. Approval of Vouchers**
Vouchers audited and certified as required by RCW 42.24.080 and expense reimbursement claims as required by RCW 42.24.090 as of this 4th day of February 2026.

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Type	Date	Beginning Check	Ending Check	
Claims	12/31/2025	43180	43180	\$10,714.11
	02/04/2026	43183	43219	\$62,198.25
	01/22/2026	EFT	EFT	\$1,697.30
	01/26/2026	EFT	EFT	\$12,925.32
			Claim Total	\$87,534.98
Payroll	02/05/2026	43181	43182	\$46,700.48
	02/05/2026	EFT	EFT	\$100,257.99
			Payroll Total	\$146,958.47
			Toal Vouchers	\$234,493.45

Moved by Doug Rainbolt. Seconded by Ben Giant.

Motion to approve Consent Agenda and Vouchers for \$234,493.45.

Further Discussion (6:25 p.m.)

Councilor Doug Rainbolt thanked staff for the detailed loan documentation and raised concerns about staff capacity to manage ongoing administrative requirements. Director of Finance and Operations Jennifer Niel stated that a senior accountant position was approved in the 2026 budget, noted it has not yet been filled, and indicated the position is expected to be filled within the next few months.

Giant – Aye, Fink – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Lindley – Aye.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

VII. Business Items (6:27 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission’s 2026 Work Plan (Continued from January 21, 2026)

1. Presentation (6:27 p.m.)

Planner Rowan Fairfield presented the Planning Commission’s annual work plan. They summarized prior feedback, including strong interest in advancing shared utilities, limited interest in addressing trash can nuisances and e-bike regulations, and conditional interest in parking contingent on returning to Council before any work begins. They also noted that Council Member Doug Rainbolt submitted additional written comments expanding the work plan.

Council Member Doug Rainbolt supported pursuing shared utilities as a way to increase density and recommended researching best practices from other cities. He also raised concerns about service development charges, emphasizing proportionality and fairness. In addition, he suggested enhanced community engagement, reinstating pre-approved building plans to reduce costs, and prioritizing a long-term review of municipal code Titles 16–19.

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley invited Planning Commission Chair Carl Trabant to respond. Chair Trabant said shared utilities are allowed under State code, supported making them a priority, and noted their importance during prior unit lot subdivision discussions. He recommended that public input occur during regular Planning Commission meetings to avoid OPMA and ex parte

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issues, stated that trash can nuisances and e-bike regulations fall outside the Commission's jurisdiction, and cautioned that a full review of Titles 16–19 would be a major workload risk.

Planner Fairfield echoed concerns about the scope of reviewing multiple code titles in one year, noting such efforts are typically staff-led with later Commission hearings. She acknowledged ex parte risks with informal outreach but said targeted engagement could be considered, and noted that utility fee structures have been studied previously, with updates possible subject to GMA limitations.

Council Member Ben Giant asked whether any of Council Member Rainbolt's proposals were inappropriate for the Planning Commission or beyond its capacity. Chair Trabant said his concerns were workload, prioritization, and meeting law compliance, not the substance of the items, and confirmed the Commission was comfortable setting aside trash can and e-bike topics.

2. Discussion (6:48 p.m.)

Council Member Patty Fink asked whether the Planning Commission work plan was intended to be staff-supported or Commission-led. Planner Rowan Fairfield explained that, given the Commission's reduced workload, staff envisioned the work being largely Commission-led.

Councilor Fink supported reviewing municipal code language for clarity rather than undertaking a full code revision, endorsed structured public engagement based on past success, and suggested informational approaches to housing topics such as modular or site-ready homes. She said she preferred the revised list because it better aligned with Council priorities and moved key issues forward while keeping staff workload in mind.

Council Member Doug Rainbolt clarified that his ordinance review proposal was meant to address recurring confusion and discretionary interpretation, not major code expansion.

Council Member Ben Giant emphasized shared utilities as the top priority, cautioned against adding new items not identified by the Planning Commission, opposed Council dictating outreach methods, and agreed that reviewing multiple code titles in one year would be too burdensome.

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley agreed that trash cans, e-bikes, and mobile vendors should start in other committees, supported flexibility in outreach, and noted that code review and shared utilities would likely require staff coordination.

Council reached consensus to remove Activities 2, 3, and 6 from the Planning Commission list and redirect them elsewhere.

Activity 1 (shared utilities) was retained as the top priority, with shared/pre-approved building plans also kept on the list. Downtown parking and short-term

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rentals in commercial zones were retained as well, resulting in Activities 1, 4, 5, and 7 moving forward of the original workplan.

Service development charges were acknowledged as important but better addressed outside the Planning Commission, potentially through City Ops and staff with engineer consulting support.

3. Action (7:21 p.m.)

Moved by Ben Giant. Seconded by David Lindley.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission’s 2026 work plan with Activity 1 (Shared Utilities) as Priority 1, and to include Activities 4, 5, and 7. Further move to remove Activities 2, 3, and 6, referring them to other committees as appropriate, and to receive Council Member Rainbolt’s additional items as guidance rather than additions to the work plan

Further Discussion (7:32 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley invited further discussion on the motion and confirmed that while Activities 1, 4, 5, and 7 were listed, only Activity 1 (shared utilities) was intended as a formal priority.

Council Member Ben Giant clarified that the remaining items were intentionally left unranked to allow the Planning Commission, in coordination with City Planner Rowan Fairfield and Mayor Marla Keethler, flexibility in sequencing and workload.

Mayor Pro Tem Lindley added that the work plan was intended to be a living document and suggested a mid-year check-in.

Council Member Patty Fink asked to confirm that Council would provide input on downtown parking before the Planning Commission proceeds, noting this condition was not explicitly stated in the work plan. Councilor Rainbolt agreed, emphasizing the need to clarify expectations and scope before work begins. Mayor Pro Tem Lindley concurred that additional focus was appropriate given the reconsideration involved.

Council Member Rainbolt also clarified that outreach concepts such as office hours were not excluded due to lack of importance, but were left to the Planning Commission’s discretion rather than included as formal work plan items.

Giant – Aye, Fink – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Lindley – Aye.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

B. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – Alpine Grove Properties Water Main Upsizing and Impact Fee Waiver (7:26 p.m.)

1. Presentation (7:27 p.m.)

Mayor Pro Tempore David Lindley introduced the Alpine Grove Properties Water Main Upsizing item and invited Chris True, Director of Public Works, to present the Memorandum of Understanding.

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Director True stated the City was unaware until construction began on SW Alpine Grove Lane that an existing 2-inch water line was in close proximity to the sewer line. Once this was discovered, the Washington State Department of Health required the City to relocate the water line.

Director True explained that the proposed agreement would waive water and sewer impact fees totaling \$36,435. He stated that the City would avoid \$75,982.32 in costs by not having to install a replacement 2-inch water line itself. He clarified that this figure does not include the cost of installing an 8-inch line, which is what is needed for the area.

Based on the analysis, the net financial benefit to the City would be \$39,547.32, in addition to the infrastructure benefit of upgrading the water main from a 2-inch to an 8-inch.

2. Discussion (7:29 p.m.)

Council Member Doug Rainbolt said he viewed the MOU primarily as a good-faith transaction that both parties had agreed to, which is why he was inclined to support it. However, he expressed some concern about whether the agreement was proportional, noting that a deeper proportionality analysis had not been conducted.

Council Member Ben Giant asked staff whether the proposed 8-inch water main was consistent with what is required under the City's water system plan, and whether a 2-inch line would have been acceptable if it were simply a replacement. Director Chris True responded that, based on the recommendation of the City's engineer, an 8-inch main is required.

Councilor Giant stated that this answered his question and confirmed that the project complies with the water plan. He added that, beyond the financial analysis, he viewed the agreement as a net benefit to the City.

3. Action (7:31 p.m.)

Moved by Patty Fink. Seconded by Ben Giant.

Motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of White Salmon and White Salmon Storage Units LLC, Alpine Grove Property Lot 2 LLC, and Alpine Grove Property Lot 3 LLC, authorizing acceptance of an upsized eight-inch (8") public water main and waiving water and sewer impact fees in an amount not to exceed \$36,435.

Further Discussion (7:32 p.m.)

City Attorney MacPherson advised that the document would return with administrative revisions to signature lines and notary clauses to verify signing authority, with no substantive changes. Chris True, Director of Public Works, added that staff would verify ownership and noted that all three properties are owned by the same individual.

Giant – Aye, Fink – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Lindley – Aye.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

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VIII. Reports and Communications (7:33 p.m.)

A. Staff Reports (7:33 p.m.)

Director of Finance and Operations Jennifer Niel requested verbal acknowledgment on two items previously discussed by the Personnel and Finance Committee: (1) a potential temporary draw of up to \$1 million from LGIP investments to manage cash flow for upcoming A19 reimbursements, and (2) a future budget amendment to allow 2025 lodging tax reimbursement invoices to be paid in 2026 for Mt Adams Chamber of Commerce.

Council Member Doug Rainbolt asked about the lodging tax reimbursement amount, and Director Niel replied that it had been approved in the 2025 grant awards, but the total was not available at the meeting. City Attorney Shawn MacPherson confirmed no formal Council action was required at this time and that any budget amendment would be brought forward in the normal course.

Councilor Fink confirmed the LGIP draw would be used solely for cash-flow purposes and replenished through reimbursements. Director Niel confirmed it would function as a short-term reimbursement loan with approximately \$3,200 per month in interest.

Council Member Ben Giant reiterated his support for both items, calling the LGIP strategy a prudent safeguard and supporting a future budget amendment to make the Mount Adams Chamber whole.

Mayor Pro Tem Lindley summarized that Council was acknowledging the two staff items without taking action at this time.

B. Council Member Reports (7:40 p.m.)

Councilor Patty Fink and Councilor Doug Rainbolt both reported no updates.

Council Member Ben Giant thanked fellow Council Members and staff for their support, noted he expected to return in person for their next meeting, and reminded Council of a Community Development Committee meeting scheduled for February 16.

Mayor Pro Tem Lindley stated he had no further updates beyond the CityLab meeting summary included in the packet.

IX. Executive Session (None)

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

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David Lindley, Mayor Pro Tempore

Signed by:



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Erika Castro Guzman, City Clerk