



White Salmon City Council MEETING MINUTES

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

Attendance:

Council Members:

David Lindley
Ben Giant
Patty Fink
Doug Rainbolt
Morella Mora

Staff:

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

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

Mayor Marla Keethler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A total of six members of the public were in attendance, both in person and via teleconference.

A. Land Acknowledgement (6:00 p.m.)

The Land Acknowledgement was delivered.

B. Presentation of the Flag (6:01 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.

III. Additions or Corrections to the Agenda (6:02 p.m.)

Council Member Patty Fink requested a change to the agenda to include a Business Item for a letter of support for the Pucker Huddle Coalition regarding State Route 1 speed control in the Urban Growth Area.

Moved by Ben Giant. Seconded by Doug Rainbolt.

Motion to add a Business Item to the agenda for a letter of support for the Pucker Huddle Coalition regarding State Route 1 speed control in the Urban Growth Area.

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

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

IV. Public Comment (6:03 p.m.)

No members of the public provided comment.

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V. Presentation (6:04 p.m.)

A. Heritage Month Presentation (6:04 p.m.)

Council Member Morella Mora introduced Jill Catherine from the Gorge Leadership Institute in recognition of Women’s History Month. Jill Catherine spoke about the importance of highlighting women’s contributions both historically and in the present, noting that celebrating current leaders helps inspire others in the community.

Jill Catherine shared details about INSPIRE: Celebrating Women in the Gorge, an event hosted by the Gorge Leadership Institute in 2025 that recognized 16 local women for their contributions across arts, education, business, nonprofit work, and community leadership. The event combined interviews, panel discussions, and performances to highlight the resilience and impact of women shaping the Gorge today.

Councilor Ben Giant asked how the City could support the initiative. Jill Catherine suggested possible sponsorship, partnership, and assistance promoting future events, including a potential women’s symposium in the Gorge.

Council members expressed appreciation for the uplifting presentation and the recognition of community leaders. Catherine also noted that the event generated strong community interest and even helped secure funding for Skamania Kids and Youth (SKY) Community Center after its presentation.

B. City Highlights with the Mayor (6:18 p.m.)

Mayor Marla Keethler provided updates on recent activities and upcoming initiatives. She highlighted the March 21 Arbor Day community event at Rheingarten Park, organized with involvement from the Tree Board, and noted that “Pizza and Policy” sessions are being planned beginning in April with a focus on water infrastructure and conservation, especially given concerns about a warmer winter and potential summer risks. Future sessions may cover housing connected to the Comprehensive Plan and the city budget to improve public understanding and engagement.

Mayor Keethler also reported on several grant opportunities, including a state recreation grant that could support the Bluff Trail project, potential Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart grants for water-related projects, and continued efforts to revive funding for the Aquifer Storage Recovery project. Council members were encouraged to attend the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Annual Conference, scheduled for June 23–26 in Spokane, which offers networking, training sessions, and opportunities to earn Certificate of Municipal Leadership credits.

In response about the USPS PO box issue, Mayor Keethler said the city recently discussed the matter with Senator Murray’s office and hopes renewed interest will help move the stalled project forward. She noted that the issue remains stuck at the regional postal level and that the city may need to be more assertive and seek additional advocacy, potentially including federal meetings, to resolve it. She also noted that spring construction activities and street improvement projects are beginning.

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

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes - February 18, 2026**
- B. Authorization to Submit Grant Application - 2026 WSDOT City Safety Program (HSIP) Grant**
- C. Pay App No. 6 - Slateco, LLC - Buck Creek Roof Replacement Project**
- 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 March 2026.

Type	Date	Beginning Check	Ending Check	
Claims	02/25/2026	EFT	EFT	\$11,199.63
	02/26/2026	43270	43272	\$8,595.12
	03/04/2026	43275	43321	\$422,540.16
			Claim Total	\$442,334.91
Payroll	03/05/2026	EFT	EFT	\$91,287.80
	03/05/2026	43273	43274	\$46,699.47
			Payroll Total	\$137,987.27
Voided	02/26/2026	43236	43236	\$(4,466.92)
	02/26/2026	43247	43247	\$(5,414.45)
			Voided Total	\$(9,881.37)
			Total Vouchers	\$570,440.81

***Moved by David Lindley. Seconded by Ben Giant.
 Motion to approve Consent Agenda and Vouchers for \$570,440.81.***

Discussion (6:25 p.m.)

Council Member Patty Fink asked clarifying questions about the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) Safety Action Plan, asking whether the grant proposal being discussed was part of that process and whether a full plan existed. Public Works Director Chris True explained that the Safety Action Plan, prepared by consultant DKS, is included in the council packet and that the city is pursuing the grant as a result of recommendations from that plan, which primarily analyzed crash and traffic safety data.

Councilor Fink noted that while the study focused on crash data, the community had raised other safety concerns, including traffic along Jewett Boulevard and Safe Routes to School issues near Spring Street. She expressed interest in addressing those concerns in the future. True confirmed that while the city is applying for funding through the WSDOT City Safety Program, other programs, such as pedestrian and bicycle funding and potential Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) grants, could also support additional safety improvements.

Mayor Marla Keethler added that the city can follow up with the full regional safety action plan developed by RTC. Council Member Doug Rainbolt commented that the report was strong and suggested that tactile grade changes at intersections, such as

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brick or textured surfaces that create noise and vibration for vehicles, can help improve driver awareness and safety.

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

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

VII. Business Item (6:29 p.m.)

A. Letter of Support – Pucker Huddle Coalition State Route 141 Speed Control

1. Presentation (6:29 p.m.)

Mayor Marla Keethler introduced the agenda addition regarding consideration of a letter of support to the County Commissioners for the Pucker Huddle Coalition’s request to reduce speeds on State Route 141.

Councilmember Patty Fink explained that the coalition had previously presented to the council and had since contacted a county commissioner, who indicated that additional community support would help strengthen their request. Councilor Fink shared that she had drafted a letter expressing the city’s general support for the coalition’s effort to reduce speeds in the area, noting the importance of safety in a growing community located near the city’s urban growth boundary.

2. Discussion (6:31 p.m.)

Councilmember Ben Giant expressed general support for safety improvements but questioned whether the proposed speed reductions were supported by data or established best practices. Councilmember Patty Fink responded that, based on her experience as a transportation professional, lowering speeds in areas with multiple driveways, curves, narrow shoulders, and pedestrian or bicycle activity is a common practice in growing suburban or ex-urban areas. She also noted personal experience along the corridor and observing safety concerns.

Councilmember David Lindley stated that he supports neighborhood-led initiatives but suggested the letter should include a clearer call to action. He proposed that the letter could request the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conduct a traffic study to evaluate potential speed changes.

Public Works Director Chris True noted that during a current construction project the city attempted to temporarily reduce speeds through nearby curves but that request was denied without a traffic study, indicating such studies are typically required before speed changes can occur.

Councilmember Morella Mora agreed that the request made sense from a safety perspective but emphasized the importance of including existing data or requesting a study to strengthen the proposal.

Councilmember Doug Rainbolt suggested referencing third-party research regarding speed reductions in small towns and their impact on safety. He shared anecdotal observations about safety concerns for cyclists traveling along the

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route, including limited visibility, fast vehicle closure rates on curves, and icy conditions during winter that can affect vehicles such as school buses.

Mayor Marla Keethler reminded the council that the roadway is under county and state jurisdiction and encouraged members to consider the process and potential precedent of intervening in issues outside city authority. She noted it would be important to understand what actions the coalition has already taken with the county commissioners and whether those efforts have been fully pursued before the city provides support.

Police Chief Mike Hepner stated that he also receives complaints from residents about speeding in the area but typically advises them to contact the county sheriff's office since the roadway is outside city limits. While he acknowledged the safety concerns, he supported the mayor's caution in confirming what steps have already been taken with the county.

Councilmember Patty Fink clarified that the coalition has spoken with their county commissioner, who expressed some support but indicated that additional backing would be helpful. She reiterated that offering city support would benefit the broader community, particularly since the area is expected to eventually become part of the city.

3. Action (6:46 p.m.)

Moved by Patty Fink. Seconded by Morella Mora.

Motion to support the Pucker Huddle Coalition's SR-141 speed control request by sending a letter of support to the county commissioners.

Morella Mora withdrew her second. Patty Fink withdrew her motion.

Further discussion

After discussion and procedural clarification from City Attorney Shawn MacPherson, both Counselor Fink withdrew the motion, and Councilor Mora withdrew the second so the council could restart with a clearer motion.

Councilmember Patty Fink then attempted a revised motion stating that the council supports the coalition but wants additional information and possible revisions to the letter before approving and sending it.

During further clarification, City Attorney MacPherson indicated that this would essentially mean the item would return at the next meeting once more information was gathered. The council shifted to consensus rather than a formal vote, so no formal motion was adopted.

The council reached a general consensus to gather additional information before moving forward. Councilmembers requested details from the coalition regarding actions already taken with the county commissioners, the rationale and data supporting the proposed speed reductions, and any community support efforts such as petitions or letters. Councilmember Morella Mora volunteered to work with the coalition to gather the requested information

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while Councilmember Patty Fink is away, with the intention of bringing a revised letter or proposal back to the council for consideration at a future meeting.

VIII. Reports and Communications (6:53 p.m.)

A. Department Head Reports (6:52 p.m.)

No questions were raised for staff regarding the department head reports, and no further updates were reported.

B. Council Member Reports (6:52 p.m.)

Councilmember Doug Rainbolt thanked Public Works Department for giving him and Councilmember David Lindley a tour of the city’s water facilities. He noted the complexity of the system and encouraged other councilmembers to take the tour to better understand the infrastructure supporting the city’s water supply.

Councilmember Morella Mora announced the upcoming International Women’s Day celebration hosted by Comunidades at White Salmon High School. The free event is expected to bring 200–300 women from across the Gorge and will include food, music, cultural activities, and a ceremony led by a Mexican healer. She also invited Latino women to attend a free yoga class she will host at Samadhi Yoga as part of the celebration.

Councilmember David Lindley also thanked staff for the water system tour and noted the significant effort required to deliver water to the community. He briefly updated the council that City Lab has been working on a draft ordinance requiring new construction to be EV-ready, led by Councilmember Patty Fink.

Councilmember Ben Giant reported that the Community Development Committee met to plan priorities for the year. The committee is considering expanding membership to include more community representation and plans to hold quarterly outreach with local businesses and the public.

Councilmember Patty Fink said work continues on the EV-ready ordinance and that it may come before the council later this Spring. She also shared that the committee supports pending plug-in solar legislation at the state level. Councilor Fink announced that the Tree Board is preparing for Tree Fest on March 21, which will include an Arbor Day proclamation and the unveiling of a draft community Tree Walk. She also noted plans for a cleanup event at Gaddis Park in coordination with local partners.

IX. Executive Session (None)

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

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Marla Keethler, Mayor

Signed by:

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Erika Castro Guzman, City Clerk