



## White Salmon City Council MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2026 – 6:00 PM  
119 NE Church Ave and Zoom Teleconference

### Attendance:

#### Council Members:

David Lindley  
Doug Rainbolt  
Morella Mora  
Ben Giant (via Zoom, 6:08 p.m.)

#### Staff:

Marla Keethler, Mayor  
Shawn MacPherson, City Attorney (Zoom)  
Jennifer Neil, Director of Finance and Operations  
Rowan Fairfield, City Planner  
Chris True, Director of Public Works  
Mike Hepner, Police Chief  
Jenne Patterson, Code Compliance Officer  
Troy Rosenberg, Utility Clerk

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

Mayor Marla Keethler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A total of 25 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 three Council members present, constituting a quorum.

***Moved by David Lindley. Seconded by Morella Mora.***

**Move to excuse the absence of Council members Ben Giant and Patty Fink from the March 18 City Council meeting.**

No further discussion.

**MOTION CARRIED 3-0**

**Mora – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Lindley – Aye.**

### III. Additions or Corrections to the Agenda (None)

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

A. **Gabrielle Gilbert**, residing outside the City, provided verbal comment.

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**V. Presentation (6:09 p.m.)**

**A. Heritage Month Presentation (6:09 p.m.)**

In recognition of Women’s History Month, Mayor Marla Keethler invited Councilor Morella Mora to introduce the evening’s presentation.

Councilor Mora spoke on the importance of representation in leadership, emphasizing that it is not just symbolic but necessary for equity. She highlighted the challenges faced by young women, especially Latina women, in systems that have not always included them, and stressed the role of mentorship and visibility in helping future leaders succeed. She then introduced Columbia High School student leader Mayra Juarez-Santoyo.

Student Mayra Juarez-Santoyo presented on Dolores Huerta and connected Huerta’s legacy to her own life as the daughter of farmworkers. She described Huerta’s early life, experiences with discrimination, and her decision to leave teaching to organize farmworkers. Student Juarez-Santoyo explained Huerta’s work co-founding the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez, her leadership during the Delano Grape Strike, and her role in securing labor rights, including the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. She also noted Huerta’s advocacy for Women’s Rights and her recognition with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Student Juarez-Santoyo emphasized that Huerta’s work is still relevant today, as many farmworkers continue to face difficult conditions. She shared a personal story about her mother’s long work hours to highlight these challenges. She concluded by reinforcing Huerta’s message that change comes through collective action, ending with “Sí se puede.”

**B. City Highlights with the Mayor (6:22 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler shared several city updates, noting that an orphaned baby elk remains in town and that the City is working with Fish and Wildlife to safely relocate it to a herd. She also recognized staff outreach related to Mainline Phase IIA construction and reminded councilmembers to direct resident questions about road impacts to City staff.

Additional updates included a Recreation and Conservation Office grant application to support improvements at the southern trailhead of the Bluff Trail property, ongoing discussions regarding water and wastewater agreements, a reminder about the upcoming Tree Fest event on March 21, and a public reminder not to flush wipes or shop rags due to damage they can cause to the wastewater system.

Mayor Keethler provided an overview of the City’s continued efforts to resolve the long-standing lack of residential mail delivery within the original White Salmon city limits. She explained that many residents still must pay for post office (PO) boxes, while residents in annexed areas may continue to receive home delivery, creating an inequity in service. She noted that the local postmaster has been a strong partner and that the issue lies at the federal level. The City previously pursued a contract delivery route during the pandemic and purchased cluster boxes using ARPA funds,

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but that effort stalled in 2023. Since then, the City has shifted its focus to securing no-fee post office boxes for affected residents.

Mayor Keethler emphasized that the issue extends beyond convenience, affecting finances, voting access, health, and equity. She noted that rising PO box costs place a burden on residents, that Washington’s vote-by-mail system effectively requires some residents to pay in order to receive ballots, and that delayed access to mailed medications can create health risks. The City has raised the issue with federal representatives, including Senators Murray and Cantwell, and continues to push for a resolution by the end of 2027. Once a solution is secured, the City expects to surplus the previously purchased cluster boxes and return to council for direction on how to reuse those funds in a way consistent with their original public health purpose.

Mayor Keethler clarified that residents wishing to advocate on the issue should direct their comments to the United States Postal Service at the national level and to the offices of Senators Murray and Cantwell, rather than to the local post office.

**VI. Consent Agenda (6:34 p.m.)**

- A. Approval of Change Order No. 6 - N Main/ Spring Street Improvements**
- B. Approval of Finance Manager Position**
- C. Approval of Meeting Minutes - March 4, 2026**
- D. Approval of Pay App No. 2 - Tapani Inc - Transmission Main Replacement Phase IIA**
- E. Approval of Pay App No. 9 - Ajax NW - N Main Spring Street Improvement**
- F. ~~Resolution 2026-03-641 – Amending the Land Use Fee Schedule~~**
- G. ~~Resolution 2026-03-642 – Citywide Garage Sale~~**
- H. 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 18<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026.**

Type	Date	Beginning Check	Ending Check	
<b>Claims</b>	03/10/2026	43322	43322	\$5,556.76
	03/18/2026	43323	43364	\$268,062.96
	03/18/2026	EFT	EFT	\$13,417.08
			<b>Claim Total</b>	<b>\$287,036.80</b>
<b>Payroll</b>	03/20/2026	EFT	EFT	\$89,025.57
			<b>Payroll Total</b>	<b>\$89,025.57</b>
			<b>Toal Vouchers</b>	<b>\$376,062.37</b>

Councilor Doug Rainbolt requested to pull Items F (Resolution 2026-03-641 - Amending the Land Use Fee Schedule) and G (Resolution 2026-03-642 - Citywide Garage Sale) for Business Item discussion.

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**Moved by David Lindley. Seconded by Doug Rainbolt.**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda, excluding Items F and G, and Vouchers for \$376,062.37.**

**Further Discussion (6:37 p.m.)**

Councilmember Rainbolt asked clarifying questions about project costs and invoices. Public Works Director Chris True explained that a lump sum was agreed upon for the conduit extension work with no additional change order penalties.

Councilor Rainbolt also inquired about markings on invoices, which staff agreed to follow up on separately.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

**VII. Public Hearing (6:39 p.m.)**

**A. Ordinance 2026-03-1185 – Amending White Salmon Municipal Code 2.21 – Hearing Examiner**

**1. Presentation (6:39 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened the public hearing on Ordinance 2026-03-1185, which proposes amendments to the White Salmon Municipal Code related to hearing procedures, at 6:39 p.m.

Mayor Keethler invited Code Compliance Officer Jenne Patterson to present. Code Compliance Officer Patterson explained that while the code previously allowed for hearings on violations, it lacked a clear mechanism to carry them out. The amendment addresses this gap by establishing a formal process within Chapter 2, rather than creating a separate system under Title 8, improving efficiency and consistency across departments.

During Council questions, Councilmember David Lindley asked about a public comment concerning appeals and quasi-judicial matters. City Attorney Shawn MacPherson clarified that appeals to Superior Court apply only to land use decisions under the Land Use Petition Act (LUPA). For general code compliance violations, the hearing examiner's decision represents the City's final determination and is not subject to further appeal through the courts. He also explained that quasi-judicial matters involve a court-like process but are not full judicial proceedings. Councilmember Lindley acknowledged the clarification, confirming that the hearing examiner would have final authority in code compliance cases.

**2. Public Testimony (6:44 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened the public testimony portion of the public hearing regarding Ordinance 2026-03-1185 at 6:44 p.m.

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Hearing none, Mayor Keethler closed the public testimony portion at 6:45 p.m.

**3. Discussion (6:45 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened discussion by inviting feedback on WSMC Section 2.21 – Hearing Examiner.

Council Member Doug Rainbolt raised concerns about broader changes, particularly the expanded role of the hearing examiner. He noted that language in Section 2.21.010(B), especially subsection B(3), seems very broad and could allow the examiner to take on significantly more responsibilities beyond land use, potentially creating ambiguity and increasing scope unintentionally.

Councilor Rainbolt questioned whether the intent of 2.21.010 B(3) was to allow flexibility for the city to apply the hearing examiner to a wide range of ordinances, resolutions, or policies. Code Compliance Officer Jenne Patterson explained that the broader language was intentional, based on state guidance and best practices from nearby jurisdictions. The goal is to create efficiency and ensure the code can accommodate various processes citywide, not just land use, while remaining adaptable over time.

Mayor Keethler clarified that the hearing examiner’s authority is not open-ended. It is only activated when explicitly called out in city code, meaning staff cannot independently assign matters to the examiner without that legal basis. She suggested that Section B(3) could be clarified by emphasizing that authority must be expressly granted through ordinance within the municipal code, rather than broadly implied.

Councilor Rainbolt followed up by asking whether policies or resolutions clearly establish that authority. Mayor Keethler responded that prior code referenced hearing examiners in certain areas, like land use, but lacked clarity in enforcement processes. The proposed update aims to improve consistency and oversight. She acknowledged the language may be overly broad and suggested refining it to make clear that the City Council ultimately grants authority through adopted code.

**4. Action (6:51 p.m.)**

**Moved by Doug Rainbolt. Seconded by David Lindley.**

**Motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2026-03-1185, amending Section 2.21.010, with a revision to subsection B3 clarifying that hearing examiner authority applies only when expressly assigned in the municipal code.**

No further discussion.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

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**VIII. Business Item (6:52 p.m.)**

**A. Resolution 2026-03-641 - Amending the Land Use Fee Schedule**

**1. Presentation (6:52 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler introduced *Additional* Business Item A (formerly Consent Agenda Item F), Resolution No. 2026-03-641, regarding amendments to the Land Use Fee Schedule, and invited Planner Rowan Fairfield to provide comments.

Planner Fairfield explained that the Tree Board is developing a recommendation for a fee-in-lieu of replacing special and significant trees under the city’s tree protection ordinance. However, the issue became urgent after notification that nearly 200 trees may be removed as part of the Hood River–White Salmon Bridge Replacement project. To address this, staff proposed an interim fee while awaiting the Tree Board’s final recommendation.

Planner Fairfield estimated the fee at approximately \$400 per replacement tree, based on nursery costs and Public Works input for installation and three years of maintenance. They noted the fee is expected to be updated once the Tree Board completes its formal recommendation. The proposed resolution would amend the current Land Use Fee Schedule by adding this fee-in-lieu provision.

**2. Discussion (6:54 p.m.)**

Council Member Doug Rainbolt asked about the range of fee estimates. Planner Rowan Fairfield explained that approaches vary widely, some cities base fees on replacement costs, while others consider the value of mature trees. They cited examples ranging from \$300–\$400 on the low end to \$2,800 in Seattle and \$1,300 in Bellevue.

Councilor Rainbolt expressed concern about charging fees tied to the bridge project, noting it provides significant regional benefit and questioning whether imposing costs in this context is appropriate. Mayor Keethler responded that mitigation is already required for the project and emphasized the city’s obligation to uphold its tree protection code. She noted that any collected fees would support community tree canopy improvements and that the financial impact is unlikely to affect the overall project.

Council Member David Lindley clarified that not all approximately 190 trees identified would necessarily qualify as regulated trees subject to the fee. He and others acknowledged the need for a more complete recommendation from the Tree Board while recognizing the urgency of the situation.

Council Member Morella Mora expressed a preference to wait for the Tree Board’s guidance. In contrast, Council Member Ben Giant supported taking

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interim action, noting that adopting a temporary fee now would prevent the city from missing an opportunity and could be refined later.

Mayor Keethler emphasized that the current fee is zero, meaning the city cannot currently collect any mitigation. She framed the issue as a broader need for Council to follow through on previously adopted tree code requirements.

Councilor Lindley agreed, noting that without action, the city is effectively assigning no value to tree loss, and expressed support for moving forward rather than delaying.

**3. Action (7:03 p.m.)**

***Moved by David Lindley. Seconded by Ben Giant.***

***Motion to adopt Resolution 2026-03-641 to establish a fee in lieu of tree replacement.***

Further discussion

Council Member Doug Rainbolt stated that while he may support the proposal, his vote should not be interpreted as endorsement of applying the fee structure to the bridge project. He emphasized that the bridge issue is distinct from the broader policy decision and should be considered separately.

**Giant – Aye, Rainbolt – Aye, Mora – Aye, Lindley – Aye.  
MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

**B. Resolution 2026-03-642 - Citywide Garage Sale (7:04 p.m.)**

**1. Presentation (7:04 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler introduced *Additional* Business Item B (formerly Consent Agenda Item G) Resolution No. 2026-03-642 regarding the Citywide Garage Sale.

**2. Discussion (7:04 p.m.)**

Council Member Doug Rainbolt supported the event but raised concern about post-event cleanup, suggesting clearer expectations to ensure items are removed from streets shortly after the sale.

Council Member Morella Mora noted that in past events, leftover items are often picked up by the community and suggested allowing a short grace period to maintain the event's sharing spirit. Staff confirmed existing code addresses unattended personal property and nuisance conditions, though enforcement depends on health and safety considerations. Additional context was provided that extended placement of items can become a nuisance or safety issue if left too long.

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Mayor Keethler and staff emphasized that the City promotes April as a cleanup period, with a scheduled community cleanup event following the garage sale. Outreach efforts include flyers, website updates, and block-by-block engagement to encourage proper disposal. Council discussed reinforcing messaging to include a reasonable cleanup timeframe, with general consensus around allowing a short grace period after the event weekend.

Council Member Mora also requested that outreach materials be made available in Spanish to increase community participation.

**3. Action (7:12 p.m.)**

***Moved by Doug Rainbolt. Seconded by Morella Mora.***

**Motion to approve Resolution No. 2026-03-642, with direction to include in outreach materials a requirement that items be removed from streets within two days following the event.**

No further discussion.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

**IX. Reports and Communications (7:13 p.m.)**

**A. Proclamation 2026-001 - Declaring April as Spring Cleaning Month (7:13 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler called attention to the City's proclamation declaring April 2026 as Spring Cleaning Month. The proclamation recognizes the importance of maintaining safe, clean, and wildfire-resilient spaces throughout White Salmon and encourages residents, businesses, and local organizations to participate in seasonal cleanup efforts that improve neighborhood appearance, reduce hazards, and strengthen community wildfire preparedness.

**B. Proclamation 2026-002 - Declaring Arbor Day 2026 (7:13 p.m.)**

Mayor Keethler also highlighted the City's proclamation declaring March 21, 2026, as Arbor Day in White Salmon. The proclamation recognizes the environmental, economic, and community benefits of trees, including erosion control, air quality improvement, wildlife habitat, property value enhancement, and beautification. It also urges residents to celebrate Arbor Day, support protection of trees and woodlands, and plant trees for future generations.

**C. Department Head Reports (7:13 p.m.)**

Public Works Director Chris True reported that the Jewett Blvd/Highway 141 project is under state review and could move toward construction as early as 2027, though no firm timeline has been confirmed.

Council Member David Lindley asked about the increase in traffic stop data. Police Chief Mike Hepner explained that the increase in reported traffic stops is due to improved tracking systems rather than increased enforcement.

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**D. Council Member Reports (7:13 p.m.)**

Council Member David Lindley reported that the City Lab is advancing an EV-ready ordinance for new construction, which will move to legal review in the coming months.

Council Member Doug Rainbolt raised concern about unsafe motorcycle activity in the city, noting observations of riders without helmets and performing dangerous maneuvers, and emphasized safety concerns. Police Chief Hepner noted that unsafe motorcycle activity would be addressed if observed and encouraged councilmembers to report concerns directly.


Council Member Morella Mora announced the grand opening of the Comunidades community center and invited the public to attend. She also provided an update on the Pucker Huddle Coalition, noting coordination with county commissioners and forthcoming communication to Council addressing prior questions, including research and speed study concerns. Mayor Marla Keethler directed that coalition correspondence be distributed through staff to ensure all Councilmembers receive the same information simultaneously.


Council Member Ben Giant reported that the Community Development Committee is evaluating priorities and will bring forward recommendations in future meetings.

**X. Executive Session (None)**

**XI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

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Marla Keethler, Mayor

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Erika Castro Guzman, City Clerk