



## White Salmon City Council MEETING MINUTES

April 15, 2026 – 6:00 PM  
119 NE Church Ave and Zoom Teleconference

### Attendance:

#### Council Members:

David Lindley  
Doug Rainbolt  
Morella Mora (Zoom)  
Ben Giant  
Patty Fink

#### 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 12 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 five Council members present, constituting a quorum.

### III. Additions or Corrections to the Agenda (6:03 p.m.)

#### A. Addition to the Agenda

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

**Motion to amend the agenda by adding Item F, Approval of the 2026 Water Rate Study with Anderson Perry & Associates.**

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

**MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

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

#### A. Mark Zanmiller, residing outside the City.

Mark Zanmiller of Dark Skies Gorge spoke in support of the International Dark Sky Week Proclamation. He discussed the impacts of light pollution on human health, wildlife, and night-sky visibility, and described the group's education and advocacy efforts, including work on lighting code updates and community outreach.

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- B. Kelly Mitchell**, residing outside the City.  
Kelly Mitchell addressed the Council regarding potential community participation in Project 250 and other patriotic celebrations related to the nation’s anniversary. He discussed a proposal through the local Freemasons organization to donate and plant a Liberty Tree descendant sapling in White Salmon and encouraged promotion of community events and patriotic activities.
- C. Gabrielle Gilbert**, residing outside the City.  
Gabrielle Gilbert spoke regarding the importance of childcare and early learning services in the community. She described a recent visit and highlighted collaborative efforts among agencies, nonprofits, schools, and businesses to support childcare and preschool programs. Gilbert discussed the economic and educational impacts of inadequate childcare access and encouraged continued community investment, policy support, and regional collaboration to expand early childhood services.
- D. Lynn Mason**, residing inside the City.  
Lynn Mason, Director of Rural Solutions, spoke regarding a recent visit to a rural childcare and early learning center at the Port of Morrow. She discussed the center’s collaborative funding model involving public agencies, schools, nonprofits, and private industry, and emphasized childcare as both a community need and economic development issue. Mason highlighted the importance of regional collaboration, holistic family support services, and sustainable funding partnerships to expand childcare access locally.

**V. Presentation (6:25 p.m.)**

- A. Heritage Month Presentation (6:25 p.m.)**  
In recognition of Arab American Heritage Month, Council introduced a presentation and shared historical information regarding former Oregon Governor Victor Atiyeh, the nation’s first Arab American governor, noting his role in establishing the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Council then viewed a brief video presentation highlighting the history, diversity, and longstanding contributions of Arab Americans in the United States. The video discussed cultural traditions, family values, food, arts, and professional contributions, while also addressing stereotypes, discrimination, and misunderstandings faced by Arab American communities. Emphasizing the importance of education, representation, inclusion, and recognition of the cultural and civic contributions of Arab Americans. Full video: [Why We Need Arab American Heritage Month](#)

- B. City Highlights with the Mayor (6:32 p.m.)**  
Mayor Marla Keethler provided several community and project updates. Updates included the White Salmon Valley Metropolitan Park District pool project going out to bid, the upcoming wildfire open house and Wildfire Ready Neighbors program,

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continued phased fuel break work, and regional meetings and training opportunities for Councilmembers.

Mayor Keethler also provided updates regarding the Bluff Trail project grant application, the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Authority federal funding application, upcoming Washington State University capstone presentations, and a national rural resource partners convening to be held at Skamania Lodge.

Mayor Keethler also addressed ongoing community childcare discussions and reviewed past and current City efforts supporting childcare access and early learning services. These efforts included funding a childcare and community center feasibility study, updating zoning regulations to allow childcare uses outright in commercial zones, supporting countywide childcare funding opportunities, adding childcare to the county infrastructure project list, supporting relocation of the Youth Center, and providing childcare reimbursement for City committee and commission members. Mayor Keethler emphasized the importance of continued regional and multi-agency collaboration to address childcare needs in the community.

Additional updates were provided regarding ongoing infrastructure and construction projects, including traffic delays and closures associated with the City’s mainline and booster pump station projects.

**VI. Consent Agenda (6:39 p.m.)**

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes - March 18, 2026**
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes - April 1, 2026**
- C. Approval of Pay App No. 3 - Tapani Inc - Transmission Main Replacement Phase IIA**
- D. Approval of Pay App No. 10 - Ajax NW - N Main Spring Street Improvement**
- E. Approval of the Mayor's Appointment to the Wildfire and Emergency**
- F. Approval of 2026 Water Rate Study with Anderson Perry & Associates, Inc.**
- ~~**G. Resolution No. 2026-04-643 – Amending Public Records Policy and Procedure**~~
- 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 15<sup>th</sup> day of April 2026.**

Type	Date	Beginning Check	Ending Check	
<b>Claims</b>	04/05/2026	EFT	EFT	\$1,289.42
	04/10/2026	EFT	EFT	\$7,920.00
	04/15/2026	EFT	EFT	\$240.00
	04/15/2026	43393	43443	1,038,638.03
			<b>Claim Total</b>	<b>\$1,048,087.45</b>
<b>Payroll</b>	04/06/2026	43391	43392	\$46,699.47
	04/06/2026	EFT	EFT	\$102,674.84
			<b>Payroll Total</b>	<b>\$149,374.31</b>
			<b>Toal Vouchers</b>	<b>\$1,197,461.76</b>

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Councilor Doug Rainbolt requested that Item G, Resolution No. 2026-04-643 – Amending Public Records Policy and Procedure, be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately under Business Items for further discussion regarding the records production policy and process.

**Moved by Ben Giant. Seconded by Patty Fink.**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda, excluding Item G, and Vouchers for \$1,197,461.76.**

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

**MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

**VII. Public Hearing (6:42 p.m.)**

**A. Ordinance 2026-04-1186 – Amending the 2026 Budget**

**1. Presentation (6:42 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened the public hearing on Ordinance No. 2026-04-1186 – Amending the 2026 Budget, at 6:42 p.m.

Staff presented the first budget amendment of 2026, describing it as primarily technical in nature and focused on updates identified during the first quarter. The amendment included approximately \$259,000 in expenditures, \$128,000 in transfers, and approximately \$8.9 million in capital expenditures primarily related to water construction projects.

Staff explained that most of the amendment was supported by restricted or designated funding sources and had minimal impact on general purpose resources. Additional adjustments included year-end fund balance updates, departmental budget reallocations, operational cost adjustments, security camera funding, human resources meeting costs, and Republic Services cost increases.

Staff also reviewed alignment of the amendment with Council priorities, including housing-related infrastructure, playground equipment at Rheingarten Park, and wildfire preparedness investments. Staff reported that the City's operating funds remained above minimum fund balance requirements and that the amendment did not create structural financial risk.

**2. Public Testimony (6:46 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened the public testimony portion of the public hearing regarding Ordinance 2026-04-1186 at 6:46 p.m.

**i. Gabrielle Gilbert, residing outside the City (6:48 p.m.)**

Gabrielle Gilbert asked whether a greater portion of funding allocated toward housing infrastructure could instead be directed

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toward childcare investments. She discussed the relationship between development, infrastructure, and community childcare needs and encouraged consideration of childcare funding as part of broader community investment strategies.

Mayor Keethler closed the public testimony portion at 6:51 p.m.

**3. Discussion (6:51 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler opened discussion by inviting feedback on the first amendment to the City's 2026 budget.

Staff clarified that the approximately \$9 million referenced in the budget amendment related to the City's water mainline infrastructure project and associated Public Works Trust Fund loan financing, which is restricted to eligible infrastructure improvements and will be repaid over a 20-year period. Additional discussion clarified that the water infrastructure improvements support the community as a whole and are not tied to a specific development project.

Council discussed the budget amendment and asked questions regarding technical budget adjustments, year-end fund balance reconciliations, utility cost increases, REIT-funded playground equipment, and the pending audit reconciliation related to the Regional Fire Authority transfer. Staff explained that many of the adjustments reflected first-quarter reconciliation and noted that certain expenditures were supported by restricted funding sources and therefore budget neutral.

**4. Action (6:56 p.m.)**

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

**Motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2026-04-1186 amending the 2026 Budget.**

No further discussion.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

**VIII. Business Item (6:57 p.m.)**

**A. Resolution No. 2026-04-643 – Amending Public Records Policy and Procedure**

**1. Presentation (6:57 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler introduced Business Item A (formerly Consent Agenda Item G), Resolution No. 2026-04-643, regarding amendments to the Public Records Policy and Procedure.

The most significant change is an increase to the per-minute fee for redacting and producing police body-camera video, a figure derived from a

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recent cost-of-service study. Other edits bring existing language into line with state guidance.

**2. Discussion (6:57 p.m.)**

Council agreed that the policy should mirror state law but voiced concern about privacy and liability when body-camera footage shows minors or other sensitive content. Council recommended having two or three staffers review such videos before release and revisiting the fee schedule to cover future costs like expert testimony in contested cases.

Staff replied that the \$0.84-per-minute charge comes from state guidelines and that demand is already heavy; with only two trained employees handling redaction, adding another review layer would strain resources.

Councilors also asked how often the city receives body-cam requests and confirmed that state RCWs allow either blurring or fully withholding exempt material, with staff favoring blurring to avoid perceived gaps.

**3. Action (7:10 p.m.)**

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

**Motion to approve Resolution 2026-04-643, updating the City's Public Records Policies and Procedures.**

Further discussion

Council commended staff for managing the tension between transparency and accountability in public-records work.

Councilor Doug Rainbolt reiterated that he would vote against the resolution unless it explicitly required more than one reviewer for videos involving sensitive material, such as footage of juveniles.

Chief Hepner acknowledged the concern but noted that the police department already struggles with a high volume of requests and relies on just two trained employees for redaction; adding a second-review step for every release would overextend resources.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-1**

**IX. Reports and Communications (7:11 p.m.)**

**A. Proclamation 2026-003 – Declaring International Dark Sky Week 2026 (7:13 p.m.)**

Mayor Marla Keethler called attention to the City's proclamation declaring International Dark Sky Week (April 13-20) 2026. This proclamation celebrates the natural night sky as a shared human heritage that inspires science, tourism, and awe. It notes that light pollution wastes energy, harms ecosystems, and diminishes health and quality of life, while the Columbia River Gorge's beauty depends in part

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on dark skies. The City urges individuals, businesses, and organizations to adopt simple practices that reduce light pollution and protect the stars for future generations.

**B. Proclamation 2026-004 – Declaring National Telecommunications Week 2026 (7:11 p.m.)**

Mayor Keethler also highlighted the City’s proclamation declaring National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (April 12-18) 2026. The proclamation honors 9-1-1 dispatchers as the first, critical link between the public and emergency responders. It underscores their role in safeguarding citizens and supporting police, fire, and medical crews through accurate information, radio monitoring, and professional compassion. Residents are encouraged to recognize and thank these communications officers for keeping the community safe.

**C. Department Head Reports (7:12 p.m.)**

Council asked staff for clarification on how the rate study converts cost data into the proposed charge. They wanted to know whether the fee simply covers expenses or intentionally includes a margin to fund future needs. Staff replied that the consultant’s methodology aims for a figure “slightly above break-even” to account for unforeseen costs, not to generate profit.

City Attorney Shawn MacPherson reported attending a recent continuing-legal-education course on emergency declarations, particularly wildfire response, and announced plans to attend next week’s Washington State Association of Municipal Attorneys conference.

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

During Council Reports, members shared project updates and upcoming goals.

Councilor Morella Mora recapped a community presentation she had given on local immigration-enforcement issues. She highlighted the city’s proclamation, Chief Hepner’s outreach, and newly signed state laws on law-enforcement transparency, noting that many residents were unaware of these efforts but reacted positively, especially to the police department’s additional training.

Councilor Doug Rainbolt described work with the Operations Committee to draft a service development charge model focused on infrastructure. He is assembling preliminary cost pools and hopes to present a first-cut framework to Council soon.

Councilor David Lindley shared he attended his first Wildfire and Emergency Preparedness Committee meeting and was encouraged by city, county, and state level steps already under way to address the approaching drought and fire season.

Councilor Patty Fink outlined several Tree Board initiatives: organizing a cleanup at Gaddis Park (tree removal, trail closures, kiosk repairs, and volunteer coordination); developing a Tree Walk brochure for May’s Wildflower Fest; and planning to plant a donated Liberty Tree for America’s 250th anniversary, with board members

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committing to watering during its establishment period. She praised Public Works Director Chris and crew for their positive work culture and asked about future placement of a “Peace Tree” seedling descended from a Hiroshima-survivor bonsai. Councilor Fink reported that work on the organics-waste study is advancing and that the consultant will conduct a community survey in May to vet the draft recommendations and collect public feedback.

**X. Executive Session (None)**

**XI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

DocuSigned by:



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Marla Keethler, Mayor

Signed by:



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Erika Castro Guzman, City Clerk