City of Independence
Minutes

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, October 14, 2025

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1. **Call to Order-Immediately following the Urban Renewal Agency meeting**. Mayor Schwarzler called the meeting to order at 6:46 PM

2. **Roll Call**. Mayor Schwarzler present.

Present:	Councilor Evan Sorce Councilor Dawn Roden Councilor Bill Boisvert Councilor/Council President Kathy Martin-Willis Councilor Shannon Corr
Absent:	Councilor Marilyn Morton, Excused
City Staff Present:	Kenna West, City Manager Myra Russell, City Recorder Amanda Christensen, HR Director Shawn Irvine, Assistant City Manager Juventino Banuelos, Police Chief

3. **Minutes**.

3.1. **Regular Meeting 09/23/2025**.
Action:
Councilor Corr moved to approve minutes as submitted; Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis seconded. Discussion: None
Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0
Ayes: Evan Sorce, Dawn Roden, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr
Nays: None
Abstentions: None

4. **Visitors/Public Comment**. 4.1 John McArdle, Independence Resident: Co-Chair of the Wall that Heals. Thanked staff, community volunteers and organizing committee for support before and during the event.
4.2. Catherine Underwood-Bush, Independence Resident: Looking to turn her property, Hedges House, into a small event venue. Asked the Council about changing from high density residential to commercial zoning, to be able to run a business. Staff will follow up.
4.3. Anne Scheck, Trammart News, Salem Resident: Spoke about an upcoming article she will write regarding the City Manager performance review.

5. **Reports/Presentations**.

5.1. **Mayor**.

- Attended the 100th annual LOC conference. Opportunity to network with peers and learn best practices as well as bring new ideas to help our community move forward.
- Met with partners at Polk County to keep in touch with our other community agencies
- Attended Ghost Walk. Great spooky event for our community.

5.2. **Council Liaison Reports**.
The mayor gave brief description of what role City Councilors play as liaisons to the various boards and commissions. Liaisons attend meetings, listen, bring back updates to share with their fellow council members, to keep the council informed about the work happening throughout the community. Liaison reports are meant to be informational in nature. By keeping these reports factual and neutral, they support the integrity of the process and show respect for the many amazing volunteers in our community who give their time and expertise to serve Independence.

5.2.1. **MINET Board: Councilor Sorce**.

- Aug 20 Board meeting. MINET is doing well. Expanding to Dallas, Fall City, Polk County. Potential of manager review for general manager.
- Aug 21 MINET Luau. Well-attended community event.

5.2.2. **Parks Board: Councilor Roden**.

- Park Board hasn't met since April, already gave a report on that meeting.
- Concerns about irrigation and trees at Sunset Park. Issues have been raised with city staff, but the PW Director is out on emergency medical leave and isn't able to respond.

5.2.3. **Independence Days Commission: Councilor Boisvert**.

- On Sept 25 the commission met about the future of Independence Days, which will be discussed with an item on the agenda.

5.3. **City Manager**.

- Introduced new Finance Director Amanda Carey.

5.4. **Staff Report: Irvine-Grants Report**.

- Discussed list of grants that are in progress and completed. Approximately $17 million dollars in grants, if you add in low interest loans, almost $24 million for city projects.
- Grants help to potentially bring down SDC charges and other benefits to the city's projects.
- Some highlights are STIF funding for the Trolley and a Special Public Works fund loan of $7.1 million that will replace the line of credit that the city took out for design and engineering work for the surface water treatment plant. Line of credit was 6.75% interest, while the new SPWF loan is 2.9% interest, which will mean significant savings.
- Discussion by council about continuing to receive this report quarterly and what an asset Marshall the grant writer is to the process.

6. Unfinished Business. None.

7. New Business.

7.1. **Independence Days Ad Hoc Board Recommendation (Irvine)**.
Irvine presented some background on the process with the Ad Hoc Board to find a new path going forward for the Independence Days event. The Ad Hoc board has met 5 times over the last couple of months, including talking with city staff that are involved in the event, to be able to better understand the event, how it's put on, and the different aspects that are important to make it a successful event. The board talked about what alternatives were available. The creation of a new 501C3 to take on event was the best option. Future profits may benefit city parks. The Ad Hoc board recommended moving forward with this option in association with a memorandum of understanding between the nonprofit and the city. Discussion by the council about who was working with the new nonprofit and who will help from the old commission during the transition period.
Action:
Councilor Roden moved that the Council accept the Independence Days Ad Hoc Commission’s recommendation to transfer the Independence Days to a new community non-profit, and that the city use a Memorandum of Understanding to codify the details of the transfer; Councilor Corr seconded.
Discussion: Council thanked volunteers for taking over event and suggestion to combine planning of events with Monmouth.
Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0
Ayes: Evan Sorce, Dawn Roden, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr
Nays: None
Abstentions: None

7.2. **Independence Days MOU (Irvine)**.
Irvine explained why a memorandum of understanding is necessary. The copy of the MOU in the packet is in draft form but will be finalized before the city manager signs it. Discussion of non-binding vs. binding. CM West had it reviewed and vetted by the City's contract attorney and the language is correct.

CM explained how the group was created to be separate from the city. While the city may still assist with some aspects of the event, the Friends group will be its own entity. Council asked for ethnicity to be added under the compliance and applicable law on non-discrimination.

Action:

Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis moved that the Council authorize the City Manager to sign a Memorandum of Understanding transferring the Independence Days event to a new community non-profit organization; Councilor Boisvert seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

Ayes: Evan Sorce, Dawn Roden, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

7.3. **Q4 Board/Committee/Commission Appointment (West)**.

CM West presented staff report regarding board and commission appointments.

Mayor mentioned that the Library and Museum boards both had positions where the applicant was unopposed, so council appointed those first.

Action:

Councilor Corr moved to approve library and museum board members that were unopposed; Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis seconded.

Discussion: Council thanked applicants for volunteering.

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

Ayes: Evan Sorce, Dawn Roden, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

- Tristan Thomas appointed to the library board in position 3 with a term expiration date: June 30, 2029
- Victor Ochoa was appointed to the Museum Advisory Board in position 3 with a term expiration date: December 31, 2026

The MINET IGA provides that each city shall be entitled to one MINET director selected from “the general public using the city’s board and commission appointment process”. The general public position, held by Michael Hicks, ended on June 30, 2025. The term to be filled is July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2028. the four applicants include: Michael Hicks—applying for reappointment, David Gewirtz—new applicant, Bradley Karkanen—new applicant; Mike Rhodes—new applicant.

Discussion: Councilor Corr — top two are Michael Hicks and Bradley Karkanen. Continuity vs. local govt interaction. Councilor Roden wants someone new. The top two are David Gewirtz and Mike Rhodes. Councilor Martin-Willis appreciates the job Michael Hicks has done and values his knowledge. Councilor Sorce asked about term limits. Staff were unaware of term limits.

Action:

Councilor Roden moved to appoint Mike Rhodes to the MINET Board. No second, motion fails.
Action:
Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis moved to reappoint Michael Hicks to the MINET board; Councilor Corr seconded. Discussion: Councilor Sorce asked if council could hold interviews in the future if there is more than one candidate for a position. Discussion of process.
Roll call vote. Motion 4-1-0

Ayes: Evan Sorce, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr
Nays: Dawn Roden
Abstentions: None

7.4. **2025 City Manager Review (Christensen)**.
Mayor made comments before Amanda Christensen presented the staff review results regarding this review being in open council session instead of the more usual executive session. HR Director Christensen presented information from an anonymous city manager employee survey. The staff comments were highly positive and reflected CM West's strong leadership, communication skills and professionalism even under external pressures. The CM's compensation follows the City's 7-step structure, which allows for a 5% performance-based increase. Staff recommendation is that the council accept the employee survey and authorize a 5% base salary increase effective October 22, 2025. Questions for staff: Discussion of how the CM salary is dispersed across funds. 15% comes from the general fund, the rest comes from enterprise funds. Question about the 5 options for answer to the evaluation which were strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

- The mayor read a letter submitted by Councilor Morton as she was unable to attend the meeting. Letter was positive and in support of CM West highlighting her responsiveness to needs and law awareness.
- Councilor Corr read a prepared statement in support of CM West. She finds CM West to be exceptionally focused, ethical and dedicated.
- Councilor Martin-Willis spoke from the heart and expressed appreciation and support for CM West.
- Councilor Boisvert mentioned different leadership styles over his military career. From the start, CM West has been open and available to talk and answer questions.
- Councilor Roden doesn't feel that she gets the answers she's looking for and gives examples. The mayor asked her to bring it back to the subject at hand and tie her criticism to the city manager's work performance.
- Councilor Sorce appreciated hearing the voices of staff who mentioned CM encouraging staff empowerment, personal growth, trust and integrity. Also appreciates the willingness of CM to have a conversation.

The mayor turned it over to CM West. She read a prepared statement. She acknowledged the review process and was humbled by the staff response. She reflected on challenges and unnecessary distractions from a small group that pulls energy, staff time and taxpayer dollars away from work in the community. She commended the city staff and highlighted significant achievements over her three-year tenure, including implementing new systems, securing over $23 million in grants and low interest loans, and advancing various infrastructure and community projects. She closed with words of gratitude to each councilor, the mayor and the community. Despite distractions, CM West emphasized the city's progress and the dedication of its staff and volunteers, while expressing commitment to continuing their work for the community's benefit.

The mayor acknowledged that it takes an incredible amount of courage to go through a performance review in public, and recognized City Manager West for facing this with such grace and professionalism. She looks forward to closing out this chapter and moving on with the continued great work that council and staff do for the community.

Action:

Councilor Corr moved that the city council accept the 2025 City Manager employee survey report as presented and authorize a 5% performance-based salary increase for the City Manager, effective October 22, 2025; Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis seconded. Discussion: None.
Roll call vote. Motion 4-1-0

Ayes: Evan Sorce, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr
Nays: Dawn Roden
Abstentions: None

8. Council Announcements.

- Councilor Corr urged Council and the public to acknowledge the integrity and professionalism of our city employees. They are invaluable partners who dedicate themselves to supporting our work and the community.
- Councilor Roden: Lebanon high school is trying to get a grant to fix their stadium. She hopes the city can promote this as they are the only school in Oregon up for this grant.
- Councilor Sorce: Homecoming weekend at WOU, support Western at home coming game and events. Soup and Pie event at the Monmouth Senior Center on October 23 from 11-1:30.

9. General Information. Items submitted here in the packet are for information only; no action was required by city council.

9.1. **Management Team Notes**.

9.1.1. **09-24-2025**.

9.2. **Miscellaneous Correspondence. Any communications received after publication of the agenda packet, but before 3:00 pm the date of the meeting, will be provided to Council at the meeting and will become a part of the official record**.

9.2.1. **Correspondence: Anne Scheck, Trammart News**.

9.3. **Pending Agenda Calendar**.

9.3.1. **09/24/2025**.

10. **Adjournment**. Mayor Schwarzler adjourned the meeting at 8:07 pm.

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MAYOR KATE SCHWARZLER

ATTEST:

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Myra Russell, City Recorder