



City of Independence Minutes

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, November 25, 2025

1. **Call to Order.** Mayor Schwarzler called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

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

Present: Councilor Evan Sorce
 Councilor Dawn Roden
 Councilor Bill Boisvert
 Councilor/Council President Kathy Martin-Willis
 Councilor Marilyn Morton
 Councilor Shannon Corr

Absent:

City Staff Kenna West, City Manager
Present: Myra Russell, City Recorder
 Rob Moody, Finance Director
 Fred Evander, City Planner
 Shawn Irvine, Assistant City Manager
 Juventino Banuelos, Police Chief
 Amanda Carey, Finance Director

3. **Minutes. Action:**

Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis moved to approve minutes from the regular council meeting 10/14/2025 and the work session 10/28/2025 as submitted; Councilor Morton seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 6-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

3.1. **Regular Meeting 10/14/2025.**

3.2. **Work Session 10/28/2025.**

4. **Visitors/Public Comment.**

- Stephen Scheck, Salem OR: Scheck expressed concerns about the strained relationship between City Manager Kenna West and his wife, Anne Sheck, publisher of Trammart News.

- Erin McIntosh, Independence, OR: McIntosh discussed the need for more participation in the Parks Board meetings and emphasized the community's desire for a simple, outdoor pool.
- David Clyne, Independence, OR: Clyne requested the removal of barbed wire fencing on a city property adjacent to his home, citing its negative impact on the neighborhood's aesthetics.

5. Reports/Presentations.

5.1. Mayor.

The Mayor mentioned several community events including:

- The Independence Downtown Association Halloween Trick or Treat event: the downtown was full of all kinds of kids in trick-or-treat costumes. It was a lot of fun for the kids, and a lot of fun for businesses to get involved.
- On November 9, the City hosted the first Cyclocross race in Independence. Well attended event with interest for them to come back.
- Big thank you to the Ella Curran Food Bank. It's an amazing resource in the community. They increased their hours during the potential disruption to the SNAP benefits. They gave out Thanksgiving supplies all day today.
- Polk County All Hands meeting twice per month. Monmouth, Independence, Polk County Fire, Cental School District and our state leaders come together to talk about issues that are facing our community.
- Welcomed new officer Bella Federico at her swearing-in ceremony last week.

Councilor Roden brought up concerns about the Cyclocross event. CM West said she would address it in her City Manager report.

5.2. Council Liaison Reports.

5.2.1. Library Board: Councilor Boisvert.

- The Library Board met on November 24 and watched a training video.
- Nearly 4000 people came through the doors of the Library in October.
- Mentioned many events that the Library is holding in December including
 - Christmas Ornament Extraveganza December 2 from 3-5pm
 - Gift Wrapping on December 11 from 2-5PM
 - Mystery Book Club December 16 at 4PM
 - Board Games December 30 from 2-4PM
 - The library is closed November 27 and 28 for Thanksgiving and December 25 and 26 for Christmas.

- The next meeting is on December 29 instead of December 22 as previously scheduled.

5.2.2. **Museum Board: Councilor Morton.**

- The Heritage Museum Board continues to be an engaged and active group, though it could use more members. Please consider applying to be a member of this board if you have a passion for history or historic preservation.
- The Heritage Museum Board is successfully collaborating with the Independence Library Board and an independent Advisory Group that is looking at all aspects of the museum's future, including location, a path for funding from outside sources, and the need for local support and a levy.
- The Library and the Museum both have 501(c)(3) groups organized to support operational fiscal needs.
- The Heritage Museum Society, of which I am a member, has a solid fund-raising plan for 2026 to support the museum's day-to-day activities and to build the organization's capital. The Society has private funds and an endowment account at the Monmouth Independence Community Foundation. This work and these accounts are independent of the City.

5.2.3. **Continuum of Care: Councilor Corr.**

- No meeting in November. The next meeting is in December.
- Addressing funding opportunity
- The Homeless Alliance is recruiting people with lived experience to sit on the Review and Recommendations Committee. See the Homeless Alliance website for more info.

5.3. **City Manager.**

- Mentioned lack of working microphones. Working on getting another one with limited funds.
- Council Questions:
 - Cyclocross Bike race: Public Works confirmed that the areas used for the event are overall in good condition. The course was intentionally routed mainly on flat trail, so erosion is not expected to be an issue, and the grass that was affected should recover naturally by spring. There are a few rutted spots and the event organizer will be returning to level those areas at their expense. They've already cleaned the path crossing, and will address a small section on the bridge as well. Beyond that, the normal rainfall will take care of the remaining mud. Public Works doesn't maintain the interior forest area. Public Works noted the

organizers expanded some of the interior trails, and removed debris from former campsites. They've made improvements outside what Public Works would do. Overall, the event's impact was minimal, particularly for the time of year, and the weekend activity brought a significant amount of traffic downtown during the event.

- Question regarding flooding at 7th St: The homeowner allowed leaves to collect in the catch basin which caused the flooding. The leaves were removed and the flooding ended.
- Sunset Park: Public Works is monitoring the plantings of the trees and shrubs. They are under a 2-year warranty and will be replaced as needed, not at city expense.
- CM extended her appreciation to the Council, staff, and to our wonderful community for the hard work, collaboration, and commitment that we've shared throughout the year. Hopes everyone finds time for rest, connection, and gratitude with family and friends. Reminder that City Hall administration is closed Thursday and Friday for the Thanksgiving holiday. Police will be on duty, but the office is closed to the public on Thursday. Open 8am–5pm on Friday.

5.4. Presentation: Financial Technical Review (Irvine).

Assistant CM Irvine introduced Dave Waffle, a consultant from Jensen Strategies LLC, to present information regarding the Capacity Needs Assessment for the City of Independence that they prepared as part of a technical assistance grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He presented a 10-slide PowerPoint and explained the scope of the program, which reviewed Independence's financial situation. The consultants found a structural deficit, particularly within the urban renewal district, which has impacted other city funds. The team conducted a high-level review of city finances, utilities, and street systems, noting positive cooperation from city staff. Mr. Waffle acknowledged the city's progress in aligning with strategic goals through the implementation of strategic financial roundtables and maintaining transparency through its website. Recommendations included looking at SDC fees, additional fees and/or a levy, continuing communication with the community. Next steps will be a debt analysis overview and multi-year financial projections. The project continues until the spring. Councilors posed a series of questions to Mr. Waffle, and he provided thorough responses, engaging in a robust discussion. The mayor followed up that this is the first chapter with more information to come. Having an outside source confirm information that was already suspected is valuable.

6. Unfinished Business. None

7. New Business.

7.1. Financial Recovery Report (Moody).

Finance Director Moody presented an overview of the "Report to the Community." Moody discussed the city's financial situation, highlighting that costs are rising faster than available resources, leading to a need for

prioritization and a long-term financial strategy. He explained that the general fund budget is about \$8 million, with public safety making up over half, and revenues are expected to fall short by \$500,000 in the current fiscal year. Staff projects a deficit in the general fund by 2028–29 if no action is taken, and personnel costs, such as medical insurance and PERS rates, are significant drivers of expenses. Moody emphasized the need to make decisions collectively to address these challenges. Moody noted that the city has taken several cost-cutting measures over the past few years, including staff reductions and reviewing fees and charges. They are now considering using one-time resources to reestablish the general fund balance, such as selling properties and closing certain funds. The city may also consider a 5-year local option levy in 2026 to help maintain community services, but it won't solve the general fund problem. In the upcoming fiscal year 26-27, the city needs to align expenses with available revenues, which may involve managing costs at the department level, keeping positions vacant, or cutting back operations.

Action:

Councilor Corr moved to accept staff's "Report to the Community: Fiscal Recovery Plan" and authorize the City Manager or her designee to distribute the report to the community; Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis seconded. Discussion: Clarification that this would just distribute the information, not act on the information with tonight's vote.

Roll call vote. Motion 6-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

7.2. **Community Services & Parks Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee (West).**

CM West explained that the idea of a task force or a committee arose out of the Budget Committee. The committee will be called the Community Services and Parks Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee, with a term of 12 months and a maximum of 7 members. Five members were proposed, including Jasper Smith, Nathan Christensen, Vickie McCubbin, Erin Seiler, and Bradley Karkanen, with two more potential members pending confirmation. Discussion of proposed members.

Action:

Councilor Morton moved that the Council adopt Resolution #25-1642 approving the formation of the Community Services and Parks Sustainability Committee as proposed and confirming the Mayor's recommended appointments.;

Councilor Sorce seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 5-1-0

Ayes: Evan Sorce, Bill Boisvert, Kathy Martin-Willis, Shannon Corr, Marilyn Morton

Nays: Dawn Roden

Abstentions: None

7.3. **Public Hearing: Revisions to Mobile Vending Standards (Evander).**

Mayor Kate Schwarzler read the hearing script regarding how the meeting

would be conducted. State Law Required Statements read.

- Declaration of Conflicts of Interest, Ex-Parte Contact, Bias: The mayor has a potential conflict of interest as her business works with mobile vendors regarding business/technical assistance.
- Public Hearing opened at 8:27 pm by Mayor Schwarzler.
- Staff Report as submitted in the agenda packet was reviewed by Evander. City Planner Evander presented a proposal to streamline the permit process by separating land use approval from business permits. The staff report recommended approval of the draft, which includes new definitions for mobile vending pads and pods, improved standards for lighting, signage, and spacing, and better coordination with landowners. The only public comment received was from the Chases, who expressed concerns about limiting the number of mobile vendors in downtown to protect brick-and-mortar businesses. Staff recommends approval.
- Discussion: Discussion of the difference between a pod and a pad. Questions regarding limitations in downtown.
- Further questions from the Council.
- Objections or testimony received: Letter received from Chase's prior to the planning commission meeting included in the packet.
- Public Testimony: Heather Chase, Independence, OR. Supports limit on downtown food truck vendors. Thinks maybe 6 would be an appropriate number. Appreciates the council's consideration.
- Discussion: Discussion centered around capping food truck numbers. City officials and business owners debated whether to limit vendors to 5 or 6, acknowledging the impact on brick-and-mortar restaurants. Concerns were raised about competition, market saturation, and the economic impact on local businesses. The group also discussed the potential for litigation if they restricted vendors based on food type. They considered the carrying capacity of downtown and the need to balance competition with fair business practices. The conversation ended with a recommendation to continue the public hearing to gather more input from affected business owners.
- Staff Response to testimony—recommend postponing the public hearing to the next meeting for more information if limited to less than 8.

Action:

Councilor Roden moved to continue the public hearing to January, 13 2026;

Councilor Sorce seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 6-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

- Hearing continued at 9:10 PM to a date certain, January 13, 2025 at 6:30 PM.

7.4. **Council Bill 2025-08: An Ordinance Amending the Standards for Mobile Vending Units in the Independence Municipal Code and Development Code (Evander).**

The Public Hearing was continued to date certain on January 13, 2026. Council bill was not considered at this time.

8. Council Announcements.

- Councilor Sorce: Holiday Tree Lighting at WOU on Friday, December 5
- Councilor Morton: Saturday December 6 Santa Train downtown at 3PM
- Mayor Schwarzler: Sunday, November 30 Glow light display kickoff at 5:30 PM with carolers in Riverview Park
- Councilor Boisvert: 628 families received Thanksgiving supplies at the Ella Curren food bank giveaway today. Also, Liz Boisvert is doing a coat drive. Donation bin here at City Hall, Grocery Outlet and at her office at 163 D St. Need for children sizes and extra large sizes.

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. **10/15/2025.**

9.1.2. **10/29/2025.**

9.1.3. **11/12/2025.**

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.**

9.3. Pending Agenda Calendar.

9.3.1. **11/12/2025.**

10. Adjournment. Mayor Schwarzler adjourned the meeting at 9:13 pm.

MAYOR KATE SCHWARZLER

ATTEST:

Myra Russell, City Recorder