



City of Independence Minutes

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, January 27, 2026

1. **Call to Order.** Mayor Schwarzler called the meeting to order at 6:02 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
Chair Corby Chappell
Commissioner Jose Oliveros
Commissioner John Southgate
Commissioner Alex Paraskevas
Commissioner Sally Coen

Absent: Councilor Marilyn Morton, Excused
Commissioner Becky Jay, Excused
Commissioner Patrick Fugeman, Excused

City Staff Present: Kenna West, City Manager
Myra Russell, City Recorder
Amanda Carey, Finance Director
Fred Evander, City Planner
Shawn Irvine, Assistant City Manager
Chelsea Gardner, Accountant II
Patrick Bodily, Library Director
Amy Christensen, Museum Director

3. **Work Sessions.**

3.1. **Joint Work Session: City Council and Planning Commission, Infill Standards (Evander/Irvine).**

Both City Councilors and Planning Commission members were present for this work session. Introduction of the project by Planner Evander. The work session focused on the "More Housing, Same Great Neighborhood" project, which aims to implement recommendations from the housing production strategy. Consultants Matt and Emmaquin presented a draft of proposed code changes, including expanding housing types, reducing minimum lot sizes, and improving design standards. Discussion of proposed changes to lot size requirements and housing density regulations, including reducing minimum lot sizes from 5,000 to 4,800 square feet for single-family homes and duplexes,

while allowing for more flexible housing options through smaller lot divisions of 2,400 square feet. They emphasized that while these changes would enable more housing units, they would not require developers to build additional units, just to create flexibility. Evander explained that these changes align with the city's housing production strategy and aim to reduce arbitrary use distinctions that prevent housing development. The Planning Commission will review the draft at their next meeting, and staff have already provided feedback on the proposal. The discussion emphasized the need for clear and objective standards in the development code, as required by state law. The planning commission vacated tables when this part of the work session ended.

3.2. Work Session: Community Services & Parks Sustainability Committee Update (Chair Seiler).

Chair Seiler of the Community Services and Parks Sustainability Committee came to the table along with the other committee member; Nathan Christensen, Bradley Karkanen, Vickie McCubbin and Jasper Smith. Chair Seiler reported on the work the committee has done over the past six weeks in exploring options to help sustain community services and parks during the next budget cycle. The committee reviewed two primary short-term funding mechanisms: a levy and a utility-based fee, but concluded that a levy is better suited for long-term service enhancement rather than short-term stabilization. The committee determined that a \$29.65 monthly fee, (this includes a \$10 public safety fee), should be implemented starting fiscal year 2026-2027, with fees set no lower than the current service level. They concluded that further service cuts were not feasible. They also recommended indexing the fee using the Consumer Price Index for the West Region, along with clear transparency on utility bills about fee purposes and allocations. The group further discussed the proposed \$19.65 fee to maintain library, museum and park services, which in some cases would be less than the levy previously considered. City officials expressed concerns about the fee's acceptance by the community, given their previous rejection of the levy, and emphasized that the fee would not address underlying budget issues. They also expressed concerns about the fee's impact on residents, particularly those with limited financial means. The committee agreed to bring the proposal to the full Budget Committee for further public discussion, input, and additional consideration of the fee in the context of the overall budget. The CS&PS Committee vacated tables when this part of the work session ended.

Short recess from 7:29 PM to 7:36 PM.

3.3. Work Session: Fee Schedule Update (Carey).

Finance Director Carey and Accountant Gardner presented information on the city's fee schedule. FD Carey incorporated requests from council following the previous meeting on updating fees. FD Carey and her team provided the original documents from the last meeting plus new notes based on feedback from councilors. The group discussed potentially consolidating various business fees, including business licenses and registrations, to streamline administration and eliminate discrepancies. The group also discussed the inclusion of home-based businesses in the fee structure, with some members questioning the necessity and cost-effectiveness of the \$100 annual fee. Staff received direction

to align business registration with those registered through the Secretary of State's office, aiming to capture larger, more formal businesses while excluding small, informal operations like garage sales or hobbyist sales. Also discussed were fees for conference room rentals at City Hall and the library, a notary fee and dog licensing fees lowered to match what the county charges. Other fee opportunities were discussed, such as a trolley tour fee, and the possibility of creating a municipal RV park. Staff will look into these other ideas. FD Carey will bring back an updated fee schedule to the next council meeting, plus the related ordinances to change those fees.

3.4. Work Session: MIRL (Irvine).

Assistant City Manager Irvine spoke again about a Modern Income Revolving Loan fund (MIRL). This is a state loan program for affordable housing, which would provide grants to developers for building homes at 120% of the area median income or less. The City gets a loan from the state and passes it on as a grant to the contractor so they can build affordable housing for purchase or rent. A fee in lieu of taxes pays the loan back to the city. This would require an ordinance or resolution to create the program. Each project would come to the council for approval. A contractor is looking to build 40–50 1,400 square feet, 3-bed, 2-bath homes that could sell for \$350,000. Council agreed that staff should further investigate the program, with a preference for purchase over rental models and a focus on quality development.

4. Adjournment.

- Councilor Roden questioned notification about Pacific Power, power outage. CM West said Pacific Power has notified residents who will be affected, but the city has no control over it.
- Councilor Roden asked about a Facebook rumor that there is an AI data center being built in Independence. CM West said that it's Independence, Kansas, not Oregon.
- Councilor Sorce asked about water meter replacements. If there are any issues with the setup due to subcontractor work, residents can call City Hall to assess the situation.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM

MAYOR KATE SCHWARZLER

ATTEST:

Myra Russell, City Recorder