



City of Independence Minutes

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026

1. **Call to Order.** Mayor Schwarzler called the work session to order at 5:31 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
 Fred Evander, City Planner
 Shawn Irvine, Assistant City Manager
 Gerald Fisher, Public Works Director

3. **Work Sessions.**

3.1. **Enterprise Zone School Fee (SEDCOR).**

Assistant CM Irvine introduced Erik Andersson and Alex Paraskevas from SEDCOR. They presented information about the Enterprise Zone program, a federal initiative implemented at the state level to incentivize business recruitment and expansion through a 3–5 year property tax exemption for the trade sector industry. They explained the Enterprise Zone program and its management by SECOR, which handles recruitment leads and regional workforce information. The discussion focused on a new requirement for 4–5-year abatements, which mandates a school support fee of 15–30% of annual property tax savings, with both Central and Dallas school districts setting the fee at 15%. The meeting also addressed SECOR's funding sources, board composition, and the challenges of managing multiple zone sponsors and school districts. Andersson discussed strategies for attracting businesses to the region, including identifying suitable sites and meeting investor requirements. This will come back to the council at a future meeting as a resolution and any projects will come to the council on a case-by-case basis.

3.2. **Grant Updates (Irvine).**

Assistant CM Irvine reviewed a handout that referenced ongoing and new grant applications, including a BUILD grant for infrastructure projects and a Travel

Award for developing paddler access in Riverview Park. Comparisons were made between grants received in previous years; however, decreases in federal and state funding slowed the pace of grant awards over the past year. The discussion touched on the grant application process, noting that more requests were made than funding available, and emphasized the need for a compelling need statement in grant proposals. The presentation ended with a brief discussion about the continuity of grant writing responsibilities if Marshall, the current grant writer, were to leave. A grant tracking system is in development within Finance to assist with reporting and administration, especially in the event of staff turnover.

3.3. Public Works Code Updates (Fisher).

Prior to the meeting, Public Works Director Fisher emailed information to the council with proposed changes to the city's public works code in chapters 26, 32 and 34 of the municipal code. The goal is to review and clarify several sections of the code, making updates to align with state and federal regulations. Planner Evander presented revisions to Section 26-46, which would require businesses to maintain clear paths on sidewalks, remove displays when closed, and assume liability for sidewalk use. The council expressed concerns about how these changes might affect specific businesses and discussed the need for clearer definitions and enforcement of the new standards.

Fisher then went page by page soliciting feedback from the council on the redline changes he had made. While reviewing and revising Chapter 32 of the city code, particularly sections related to traffic control and the delegation of powers, council members discussed concerns about the current language, including potential liability issues and the need to clarify the process for making decisions about traffic signage and other infrastructure. The group agreed to revise the code to specify that the Public Works Director would make recommendations to the council, which would then have the final say on major decisions. They also discussed the need to update language that is outdated or no longer relevant to modern practices. Fisher will draft new language for review by the council and the city attorney.

The council discussed other items such as regulations and processes related to backflow prevention, septic system decommissioning, and water line extensions. Fisher clarified that backflow prevention devices are necessary to prevent contaminants from entering the public water system, and the city must report annually to the Oregon Health Authority. The group also addressed the responsibility for water line extensions, noting that developers are required to extend services to the far end of their properties, but individual property owners are responsible for costs unless part of a capital project. The discussion concluded with concerns about the timeline for connecting septic systems to the public system, with a 90-day window proposed, and the possibility of adjusting this timeline based on individual circumstances. Council noted some typos to correct before the final version is compiled.

PW Director Fisher will send out revisions to the council for review and then bring back the proposed changes to the June council meeting.

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

MAYOR KATE SCHWARZLER

ATTEST:

Myra Russell, City Recorder