



City of Independence Minutes

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, July 14, 2026

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/Council President Kathy Martin-Willis
Councilor Marilyn Morton
Councilor Shannon Corr

Absent: Councilor Bill Boisvert, 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
Juventino Banuelos, Police Chief
Dustin Lueckenotte, Public Works Director

3. **Minutes.**

3.1. **Regular Meeting 06/23/2026.**

Action:

Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis moved to approve minutes as submitted; Councilor Corr seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

4. **Visitors/Public Comment.**

1. Terri Croft, Independence, OR: Did not wish to speak but wanted to acknowledge her supports of the library, parks and museum.
2. Karin Johnson, Independence, OR: Speaking on behalf of the Friends of Community Parks, thanked the City for its support in helping make the inaugural Independence Days celebration led by the new group a success. She noted that a full report, including attendance numbers and community feedback, will be

presented to the Council at an August meeting.

5. Reports/Presentations.

5.1. Center Street Bridge Project Update (ODOT).

Andrew Walker (ODOT) and Bob Goodrich (DOWL Project Manager) presented an overview of the Center Street Bridge seismic retrofit project, which will be completed in two phases due to challenging soil conditions on the west approach. Phase 1 is expected to begin construction in late 2026 and continue through 2030, with Phase 2 to follow in the coming years. The project will strengthen the bridge for Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquakes, replace a major water line, and improve long-term seismic resilience, although the west approach will remain vulnerable until Phase 2 is completed. ODOT reviewed anticipated construction impacts, including temporary lane reductions, ramp closures, two weekend nighttime bridge closures, and extensive public outreach to minimize traffic disruptions. Council discussed potential effects on the Independence Bridge and local traffic, and ODOT committed to coordinating with City staff as construction approaches.

5.2. Mayor.

- Thanked Friends of Community Parks for a great event on the 4th of July.
- The Quilt project for America 250 is up in the lobby with other quilts throughout the community.
- Welcome to new Public Works Director Dustin Lueckenotte.

5.3. Council Liaison Reports.

5.3.1. Councilor Sorce: MINET Board.

- Met in June and reviewed and approved the budget.
- MINET and Willamette Fiber have approved a new partnership with the owners of the infrastructure to provide fiber service in Dallas and portions of rural Polk County.

5.3.2. Councilor Roden: Parks Board.

- The meeting for July was canceled. The Parks System Master Plan was approved at the last meeting that was held.
- With the retirement of PW Director Fisher, the Parks Board is transitioning to new leadership with PW Director Lueckenotte.

5.4. City Manager.

- The Library's Summer Reading Program has attracted 738 participants and remains open through August 13. Summer programs continue to

see strong attendance, the library is hosting employment assistance through Goodwill Job Connections, and several family programs and activities are scheduled throughout the week

- PW Director Gerald Fisher retired last week. The new PW Director is Dustin Lueckenotte from North Plains. He introduced himself, highlighting his military, teaching, and public works experience, including extensive expertise in construction management, infrastructure inspection, and capital projects. He emphasized the importance of communication, collaboration, and community engagement, expressed appreciation for the Public Works staff and former Director Gerald Fisher's succession planning, and said he is excited to serve the City in his new role.
- Councilor Sorce requested that the previous grants report be made available to the community before the updated grants presentation at the next Council work session.

6. Unfinished Business. None.

7. New Business.

7.1. Public Hearing: CDBG Grant Funding (Irvine).

Assistant CM Irvine explained the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and noted that the City is proposing to partner with Habitat for Humanity on a grant application to fund infrastructure for a 10-unit affordable homeownership development. The required public hearing was held to gather community input before submitting the application, with no Council action required at this stage.

Mayor Kate Schwarzler read the hearing script regarding how the meeting would be conducted.

- Public Hearing opened at 7:19 pm by Mayor Schwarzler.
- Staff Report as submitted in the agenda packet was reviewed by Asst. CM Irvine. Irvine noted that the proposed Community Development Block Grant partnership with Habitat for Humanity would have minimal fiscal impact on the City. Habitat for Humanity will prepare the grant application, while the City will serve as the fiscal agent and submit required reporting to the State.
- Public Testimony: Jerry Ambriz, a representative from Habitat for Humanity described plans to develop 10 affordable homes on property on 7th Street and explained that Community Development Block Grant funding would help complete the project's infrastructure. He noted the homes would serve families earning 50–80% of the area median income, with preference given to local families, and outlined Habitat's outreach and application process for prospective homeowners.
- Hearing closed at 7:24 PM.

7.2. Liquor License Application, Change of Ownership: Mendi's Pizza (Gilbert).

Council considered a change of ownership OLCC liquor license application for

Mendi's. Chief Banuelos reported that the background investigation found no issues that would preclude licensure, and Council briefly discussed the application's off-premises sales designation and the new owners' plans to largely keep the existing menu.

Action:

Councilor Roden moved to recommend approval of the above liquor license request; Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis seconded. Discussion: None. Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

7.3. Public Hearing: Proposed Ordinance 1638, an Ordinance to Adopt a Set of Revisions to the Independence Development Code to Implement Recommendations from the Housing Production Strategy (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: None
- Public Hearing opened at 7:30 pm by Mayor Schwarzler.
- Staff Report as submitted in the agenda packet was reviewed by Planner Evander. Evander introduced proposed amendments to the Development Code that would allow a wider variety of housing types in residential neighborhoods, reduce the minimum lot size from 5,000 to 4,800 square feet in most residential zones, and update residential design standards to accommodate those housing types. Staff noted the changes are consistent with Oregon planning goals and build on previous Council work sessions and a neighborhood walking tour. Matt Hastie from MiG gave a presentation about the proposed amendments to the Independence Development Code to expand housing options, increase flexibility for property owners, and support implementation of the City's Housing Production Strategy while maintaining neighborhood character.
- Discussion: Council discussed cottage cluster standards, impacts within the Historic District, and how the changes would allow more practical infill housing opportunities while retaining design and historic review standards.
- Further questions from the Council. None.
- Objections or testimony received: None.
- Public Testimony: Gail Oberst, Independence, OR: expressed strong support for the proposed code amendments, stating that the infill project inspired them to pursue redevelopment of their own oversized property and that the changes would provide beneficial housing opportunities for the community.
- Discussion: This will give staff more flexibility to get to "yes" on projects.
- Hearing closed at 8:00 PM.

Action:

Councilor Corr moved to read the proposed Ordinance 1638, an ordinance to adopt a set of revisions to the Independence Development Code to implement recommendations from the Housing Production Strategy, in full as the text is contained in the Council packet, for the first time; Councilor Morton seconded. Discussion: None

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

Recorder Russell read the title of the proposed ordinance: An Ordinance to Adopt a Set of Revisions to the Independence Development Code to Ordinance 1638 Implement Recommendations from the Housing Production Strategy.

Action:

2nd Motion: Councilor Roden moved to read the proposed Ordinance 1638 for the second time by title only.; Councilor Sorce seconded. Discussion:None.

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

Recorder Russell read the title of the proposed ordinance: An Ordinance to Adopt a Set of Revisions to the Independence Development Code to Ordinance 1638 Implement Recommendations from the Housing Production Strategy.

Action:

3rd Motion: Councilor/Council President Martin-Willis moved to adopt the proposed Ordinance 1638.; Councilor Corr seconded. Discussion: None.

Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

Ordinance 1638 is adopted.

7.4. **Q3 Financials (Carey).**

Finance Director Carey presented the third quarter financial report, highlighting stable public safety fee and utility revenues, updated debt schedules, and expanded reporting on the City's outstanding debt and Urban Renewal Agency (URA) interfund loans. Council discussed the repayment timeline for URA debt, requested additional detail and public education regarding the City's debt obligations and the purpose and history of the URA, and expressed appreciation for the increased financial transparency and quarterly reporting. Council also discussed the City's long-term financial outlook, the structural budget deficit, and the efforts undertaken over the past several years to reduce expenditures, evaluate alternatives, and develop sustainable funding solutions for City services.

7.5. **Q3 Board, Commission, Committee Appointments (West).**

The Mayor and Council considered appointments to the Library Board and discussed the applicants' qualifications. There were three applicants for two open positions. Council expressed support for reappointing Nathan Christensen and appointing Lorraine Sorenson to the Library Board, while encouraging another applicant, Loretta Pecchioni, to consider serving with the Friends of the

Library or on another City board or committee.

- Position #1 – Term Expiration June 30, 2030, Lorraine Sorenson
- Position #6 – Term Expiration June 30, 2030, Nathan Christensen

For the Ad Hoc Community Services and Parks Sustainability Committee, Erin Seiler moved away and this left a vacancy on that board. The Mayor appointed Patrick Fugeman to this position.

7.6. **Executive Session, 3rd Floor Conference Room Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(e) to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions..**

Mayor Kate read the text for Executive Session, 3rd Floor Conference Room: Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(e) to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions. Council left the chamber for Executive session at 8:47 pm. Council returned to the chamber to continue the meeting at 9:09 pm.

7.7. **Potential Action from Executive Session: Real Estate Negotiation (West).**

Action:

Councilor Sorce moved that the council direct the city manager to proceed in negotiations for the sale; Councilor Roden seconded. Discussion: None
Roll call vote. Motion 5-0-0

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

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

8. **Council Announcements.**

- Councilor Roden shared that her daughter was seriously injured by an e-bike or scooter during the Independence Day celebration and urged the community and the State to pursue stronger safety regulations and increased awareness regarding e-bikes and scooters. She also encouraged parents to become familiar with existing safety rules and ensure children use appropriate safety equipment, including helmets.
- Councilor Corr encouraged community members to participate in the free chair yoga classes held at 1:00 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month in the Library meeting room, noting the program provides a beneficial opportunity for exercise and wellness.
- Councilor Sorce encouraged residents to visit and make use of the City's library and museum, noting that many community members have not experienced these public resources. The councilor urged residents to explore the museum's current exhibits, participate in library programs, and engage with the community services they help support.

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. **06/24/2026.**

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: Scheck, received 7/13/2026.**

9.3. **Pending Agenda Calendar.**

9.3.1. **06/24/2026.**

10. Adjournment. Mayor Schwarzler adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.

MAYOR KATE SCHWARZLER

ATTEST:

Myra Russell, City Recorder