

**City of Rainier
City Council Meeting
February 2, 2026
6 p.m.
Rainier City Hall**

Mayor Jerry Cole called the council meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Council Present: Scott Cooper, Robert duPlessis, Jeremy Howell, Mike Kreger, Paul Langner, Charleen Ratkie and Denise Watson

Council Absent: None

City Attorney Present: No

City Staff Present: Gregg Griffith, Police Chief; W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator; Russ Reigel, Public Works Director; Elisha Shulda, Finance Director

Flag Salute

Additions/Deletions from the Agenda: Mayor Jerry Cole said he wanted to add a discussion about County Road Department Concerns to the agenda. Council President Mike Kreger moved to add that item. That motion was seconded by Councilor Denise Watson. Councilors Scott Cooper, Robert duPlessis, Jeremy Howell, Kreger, Paul Langner, Charleen Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Mayor's Address: Cole said he stands with the Iranian people, who have been oppressed for the last 47 years and are now losing their lives for raising their voices. He also read a proclamation into the record declaring it Seattle Seahawks week, in honor of that team reaching the Super Bowl.

Visitor Comments: There were no visitor comments at this time.

Consider Approval of the Consent Agenda

Consider Approval of the January 5, 2026 Regular Council Meeting Minutes and Monthly Financial Statements—Cooper moved to approve the consent agenda. That motion was seconded by Kreger. Cooper, duPlessis, Howell, Kreger, Langner, Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

New Business

a. Library Board Appointment—City Administrator W. Scott Jorgensen said that applicant Sarah Borders has already been attending board meetings and is helping to organize the library. The Library Board voted unanimously at its last meeting to recommend her appointment. Kreger moved to appoint Borders to the Library Board. That motion was seconded by Cooper. Cooper, duPlessis, Howell, Kreger, Langner, Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

b. Audit Report Presentation—Kathy Wilson from Singer Lewak said there were no findings and everything was in compliance. However, she did caution that the charges for sewer services are not matching up with the operating expenses. Jorgensen praised

Finance Director Elisha Shulda for her efforts. He and council could not exercise proper financial oversight for months due to personnel issues. Wilson confirmed that there were improper journal entries made, but those have since been fixed. Watson asked about what safeguards and procedures are in place to ensure accurate journal entries. Jorgensen said the finance clerk position had to be eliminated and a finance director position created to ensure that such a situation never happens again.

c. Banking Options—Cole said that InRoads Credit Union isn't meeting the City's needs. Fiber Credit Union won't meet the City's needs for processing payroll. Jorgensen said Cole brought that issue up in the audit. The Mayor used to approve payroll, but the system at InRoads changed and that doesn't happen anymore. Shulda confirmed that Columbia Bank has a department that handles public deposits. Cooper moved to change the City's bank to Columbia Bank. That motion was seconded by Langner. Cooper, duPlessis, Howell, Kreger, Langner, Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed. Jorgensen will have an official resolution ready for approval at the next council meeting.

d. Sewer Fund Balance and Performance—Shulda said that the sewer fund is in the negative and will require a transfer from the General Fund contingency to balance. That will probably use up the entire general fund contingency. Langner said an error was made and the City isn't taking in enough revenue to cover expenses. Shulda said that if nothing changes, the City will have the same issue in the next budget. Langner suggested raising the water rates three percent and sewer rates 15 percent and tying future increases to inflation. Jorgensen said there are many fees that the City charges that are too low to cover the costs of providing those services. None of those fees have been increased in the five years he's worked for the City. Langner suggested that a revenue committee be formed. Council agreed by consensus. Cooper and Ratkie agreed to be members, and Langner agreed to serve as chair. Cole said that the sewer rates were so low for so long because the City was taking septage. But doing so was destroying the wastewater plant. Shulda said a resolution will be needed to forgive the prior interfund loan from the General Fund to the Sewer Fund, and a supplemental budget will also be necessary. The Revenue Committee will meet in the next couple of weeks and come to the March meeting with recommendations.

e. Consider Bids for City Hall Improvements—Cole said that the only item in the bids that's really necessary is the records room. Shulda said there is \$49,000 left in the City Hall Improvement Fund. Cole said council should approve the lower bid for the records room work and return the rest of the City Hall Improvement Fund balance to the General Fund. Watson moved to approve the \$6625 bid for work on the records room from Chesy Joe's Remodeling. That motion was seconded by Kreger. Cooper, duPlessis, Howell, Kreger, Langner, Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

f. County Road Department Concerns—Cole said there are county roads in city limits. The county has yet to make any final decisions about any potential changes to the operations of its road department. Its main station is in St. Helens, but it has satellite stations in Clatskanie, Rainier and Vernonia. The proposal is to pull the employees from the substations and have them report to the main station in St. Helens. Langner said Council should show its support for the satellite stations. Cooper moved to direct staff to write a letter urging the County to maintain the road department's satellite stations. That motion was seconded by Langner. Cooper, duPlessis, Howell, Kreger, Langner, Ratkie and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Unfinished Business

a. Wastewater Plant MAO—Public Works Director Russ Reigel said that the manhole lining should be done in the next month or so.

Reports—Police Chief Gregg Griffith said Officer Michael Hernandez had his first day at the police academy today and is set to graduate May 22. duPlessis said that the signs memorializing late former Chief Ralph Painter were recently replaced. Watson said she attended the recent ribbon cutting ceremony for Wrae Collective and a meeting regarding the bus line between Rainier and Longview. The stop at the Senior Center may be discontinued due to lack of ridership. Cole said that the promoter of the summer concert series has decided not to do it again this year, but the City is willing to partner with anyone who wants to take it on. Jorgensen said he met the new owner of Grocery Outlet and visited Wrae Collective with Cole. He sent REDCO’s financial reports to its taxing districts and also visited Mather Martial Arts Academy and Upper Cuts.

City Calendar/Announcements

Cole adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Mayor Jerry Cole

W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator