

**City of Rainier
City Council Meeting
September 14, 2026
6 p.m.
Rainier City Hall**

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

Council Present: Mayor Jerry Cole, Robert duPlessis, Jeremy Howell, Paul Langner, and Denise Watson

Council Absent: Scott Cooper, Mike Kreger and Charleen Ratkie

City Attorney Present: No

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

Flag Salute

Mayor's Address—Mayor Jerry Cole read a proclamation into the record declaring September 25 Dolly Parton Day in Rainier, in honor of the legendary country music singer, who had recently passed away.

Visitor Comments—Michael Self said there are tree branches hanging low on Washington Way between Mill Street and the stop sign. Doris Hale said that Richards Road looks much better after a project was recently completed there. Shelly Adams requested that some trees along Old Rainier Road be trimmed. City Administrator W. Scott Jorgensen said that a bid for that work is on the agenda for later on in the meeting.

Approval of the Agenda—Councilor Paul Langner moved to approve the agenda. That motion was seconded by Councilor Robert duPlessis. duPlessis, Jeremy Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Consider Approval of the Consent Agenda

Consider Approval of the August 3, 2026 Regular Council Meeting Minutes and Monthly Financial Statements—Watson moved to approve the consent agenda. That motion was seconded by Langner. duPlessis, Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Unfinished Business

a. Wastewater Plant MAO—Jorgensen explained that the City's next deadline is for the design work for a wastewater treatment plant expansion to be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for review and approval in about a year. The City has been under the MAO for years and is pre-approved for loan packages. This was discussed at a previous meeting, and he didn't feel comfortable putting council and the residents of Rainier in the position of taking on that much debt. But the DEQ regulators realized that the plant is nowhere near capacity during the summer. The issue is that the collections system is leaky, and DEQ is giving the City a couple of years to fix it. A screw press is the only kind of capacity expansion that will enable the City to earn

revenue. He and Public Works Director Russ Reigel took field trips to Sweet Home and Scappoose to see the screw press systems at their wastewater plants. Most of the City's debt service will be paid off in the next few years. Most of it is from the most recent wastewater plant upgrade. Sewer rates had to be increased because the City stopped taking septage. The loan would be for \$4 million, but up to \$2 million of that principle can be forgiven. But that gets reduced drastically after October 1. State officials want something in the minutes for this meeting about the loan so they can begin processing the paperwork to lock in the principle forgiveness. The payments would start after the construction is complete, and the current debt service will be paid off by then. It's \$750,000 per year right now and comes out of the Sewer Fund. Cole said the City would have up to five years to utilize the funds. Watson moved to authorize staff to move forward with obtaining the loan. That motion was seconded by duPlessis. duPlessis, Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.

New Business

- a. City Forester Update—City Forester Pat McCoy said that the timber market is stable. Inventories at some regional mills are at capacity. There were changes to the rules about stream buffers, but those didn't affect the watershed all that much. He's considering doing a timber sale and can start the permitting process. Langner said the City needs a new forestry plan. There are more regulations and there needs to be a cruise of the watershed's current inventory. McCoy agreed that the current plan is outdated. Langner asked McCoy if he could put together an RFP for a cruise and a new management plan. McCoy confirmed that he can. Langner moved to direct McCoy to put together an RFP for a cruise and an updated plan. That motion was seconded by Howell. duPlessis, Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.
- b. Library Board Appointment—duPlessis moved to appoint Janet Sedgley to the Library Board. That motion was seconded by Watson. duPlessis, Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed.
- c. Veterans Way Safety Improvements—Cole suggested that this item be reconsidered at the October meeting. Council agreed by consensus.

Reports—Watson said that she's been taking the FEMA emergency management courses. Howell moved to approve the bid for tree removal on Old Rainier Road for \$2500. That motion was seconded by duPlessis. duPlessis, Howell, Langner and Watson all voted in favor. None were opposed. Finance Director Elisha Shulda did a brief presentation about the merchant fees that credit card companies charge the City per transaction. Council agreed by consensus to direct staff to bring back a resolution establishing a fee to recover those costs.

City Calendar/Announcements—Jorgensen said that the Rainier Chamber of Commerce is hosting a forum at the Senior Center September 30 for mayoral and contested city council candidates.

Cole adjourned the meeting at 7:02 p.m.