



MINUTES
RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
Tuesday, February 25, 2025
Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

City Council Workshop - 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Richardson called the Council workshop to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: Mayor Richardson	Present
Mayor Pro Tem Kent	Absent
Councilmember Jones	Present
Councilmember Lukson	Present
Councilmember Maier	Present
Councilmember VanDyke	Present
Councilmember Whitten	Present

Also present were City Manager Amundson, Assistant City Manager Florence, City Attorney Kintzley, Fire Chief Huntington, Chief of Police Pilcher, Energy Services Director Whitney, Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite, Public Works Director D'Alessandro, and City Clerk Rogers.

Agenda Items

1. Website Redesign Update

Communications & Marketing Manager Alexander provided an update on the City's website redesign, which includes the City's main website and four (4) additional subsites. The project will enhance the user experience by improving accessibility, making the sites more mobile-friendly, and adopting a search-centric format that allows users to find answers more efficiently.

A governance guide has been implemented to ensure consistency in content and branding. Key improvements include a modernized design, enhanced accessibility features such as improved readability and alternative text, and the addition of a Citybot named "CORI" to assist users with inquiries. The bot will use artificial intelligence (AI) to provide answers and direct users to relevant resources while also allowing escalation when necessary.

The project is currently in the quality assurance and final design phase. The City anticipates launching the new websites in the second quarter of 2025.

Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff throughout the presentation. Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet.

2. City of Richland Park Reopening Presentation

Parks & Public Facilities Director Chris Waite presented an update on the reopening of Wye Park and Columbia Park West, outlining the history, challenges, and response efforts that led to the parks' temporary closure. He reiterated that the primary goal of the Department is to provide a safe space for community recreation while also protecting natural resources, wildlife, and park infrastructure.

Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite emphasized that closure was a last resort after multiple mitigation efforts failed, including increased ranger and police patrols, amenity closures, and signage to deter problematic behavior. Despite these efforts, the parks continued to experience recurring vandalism, drug-related activity, excessive litter, and unauthorized encampments. Fires also became a major safety concern, with several incidents occurring near public use areas. These factors created an unsustainable situation, leading to the decision to temporarily close the parks for cleanup, restoration, and strategic planning.

During the closure, extensive work was completed to address these challenges, including a full-scale cleanup, vegetation management in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and an operational analysis of park ranger duties. Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite described modifications made to improve safety, such as clearing low-visibility areas along the shoreline and streamlining ranger responsibilities to focus primarily on patrols and community engagement.

The phased reopening will begin at Columbia Park West, featuring increased police and ranger presence, resource navigator visits to support vulnerable individuals, and continued collaboration with local agencies. The need for a balanced approach, ensuring public access while maintaining safety and environmental integrity was also discussed.

In conclusion, Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite stated that long-term success will require ongoing partnerships between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the community to address the broader challenges affecting park use and safety.

Council provided comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff throughout the presentation. Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet.

3. Solid Waste Operations Update, Changes, and Vision

Public Works Director D' Alessandro presented an update on the Horn Rapids Landfill Expansion Phase 2 Project, proposed changes to solid waste services, and future opportunities for landfill operations.

The Horn Rapids Landfill Expansion Project will extend landfill operations by twenty (20) years, with design completion expected by March 2025. Due to funding constraints, the City plans to issue \$10 million in bonds over a twenty (20) year term. A rate study will be conducted once the financing details are finalized.

Regarding landfill operations, the City currently operates Monday through Sunday from March to October with Sunday closures during the winter. Sunday operations are under review due to low customer turnout and financial inefficiencies. To address these issues, staff is exploring the possibility of eliminating Sunday hours while extending operation hours Monday through Saturday.

Public Works Director D'Alessandro then reviewed residential waste collection costs and compared them to other providers. The City's recycling program consists of both curbside and drop boxes. However, recycling drop boxes face significant challenges, including illegal dumping, non-resident use, and concerns related to the unhoused population. Many drop boxes are thirty (30) years old, deteriorating, and costly to replace at approximately \$10,000 each. To address these issues, staff proposes a secure, gated system at the Queensgate drop-off location while closing the Uptown and Ace Hardware sites. Recycling services would be consolidated to Queensgate, the landfill, and the DTG Recycling Center, while curbside recycling could be expanded and potentially included in the base rate. This also included a discussion of ending glass recycling and diverting glass to the Landfill due to a lack of financially viable glass recycling vendors in the Pacific Northwest.

The presentation also included a review of green waste and the Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) facility at the Horn Rapids Landfill. Looking ahead, the City is exploring regional green waste disposal, RV waste disposal, and wholesale landfill agreements to improve efficiency and compliance with environmental regulations. Future decisions on service modifications, financing, and rate adjustments will be determined through ongoing City Council discussions and financial evaluations.

Council provided comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff throughout the presentation, including expressed support for closing the Horn Rapids Landfill on Sundays. The majority of Council expressed support for ending the drop box program with consideration of modifying recycling services during holidays and opt-in program for curbside recycling. Council expressed support in ending glass recycling until a viable alternative is identified. Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet.

4. Standards of Cover - Turnout Response and Service Level

Fire Chief Huntington and Deputy Fire Chief Aust presented updates on the Standards of Cover (SoC), which outlines how fire department resources are deployed to effectively manage emergencies. The SoC is based on a community risk assessment and informs decisions on resource allocation, station coverage, staffing recommendations, and response qualifications.

The presentation emphasized the importance of aligning local response standards with national benchmarks while considering geographic, staffing, and operational constraints.

Key response time definitions were reviewed, including turnout and travel times across various incident types (dispatch to enroute), travel time (enroute to arrival), and Effective

Response Force (ERF) (the minimum personnel and equipment needed for an incident). The proposed updates aim to address evolving service demands.

Several challenges impacting response times were discussed, including traffic congestion, commuter hour delays, train crossings, weather conditions, concurrent calls, and access issues due to road closures or law enforcement staging. These factors necessitate adjustments to response standards to ensure more realistic and effective emergency coverage.

Fire Chief Huntington outlined the next steps, including a Comprehensive Plan Service Levels review at the Council Workshop scheduled in April and a resolution for Council consideration in June to formally adopt the revised SoC.

Following the presentation, Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff. Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet.

Future Workshop Agenda Items

None.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the workshop at 8:24 p.m.

APPROVED:



Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: March 4, 2025

DATE PUBLISHED: March 5, 2025