



MINUTES
RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
Tuesday, May 27, 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, Deputy City Manager Schiessl, Assistant City Manager Florence, City Attorney Kintzley, Fire Chief Huntington, Chief of Police Pilcher, Finance Director Allen, Energy Services Director Whitney, Public Works Director D'Alessandro, and City Clerk Rogers.

Agenda Items

1. Hydropower and Snake River Dams Update

Energy Services Director Whitney introduced the topic and representatives from Northwest River Partners (NRP), one of the City’s educational and outreach collaborators. Present from NRP were Executive Director Clark Mather, Deputy Executive Director Austin Rohr, and Outreach and Research Manager, Victor Valerio.

Energy Services Director Whitney provided a brief overview of NRP’s mission, highlighting its focus on hydropower education and research. He noted that 99.5% of the City of Richland’s power is supplied by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), with the remainder sourced through a power purchase agreement with Tucci Energy Services, which supplies solar energy generated at the Horn Rapids Solar, Storage, & Training site (HRSST) in North Richland.

He further explained that BPA derives the majority of its energy from the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS), which includes thirty-one (31) dams on the Columbia River and four (4) major dams on the lower Snake River. As of 2023, approximately 78% of Richland’s fuel mix comes from hydropower, with an additional 11% from the Columbia Generating Station.

Energy Services Director Whitney turned the presentation over to Clark Mather, who opened by emphasizing the critical role hydropower plays in the Pacific Northwest. Mr. Mather described NRP as an advocacy and educational organization with members across the region, including several Tri-Cities entities. He outlined key challenges facing the energy sector, including increased demand from data centers, affordability concerns, and staffing reductions at federal hydropower facilities.

Mr. Mather also addressed misconceptions about fish populations in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, presenting data that challenges the narrative of consistent decline. In conclusion, Mr. Mather discussed the importance of hydropower as a foundational energy source in the Pacific Northwest, supporting job creation, clean air, and economic stability. He emphasized that the region's hydropower system remains under threat and that energy demand is expected to increase by 30% over the next decade.

Mr. Rohr followed with an overview of NRP's "*Our Power is Water*" campaign, a public outreach initiative using digital media outreach, advertising, and community engagement to raise public awareness and build support for hydropower. The presentation concluded with a call to action to continue investing in the system and to advocate for the protection of the regional hydropower system.

Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet. Mr. Mather, Mr. Rohr, and Energy Services Director Whitney responded to Council inquiries throughout the presentation.

Councilmember VanDyke left the meeting at 6:44 p.m.

2. 2026-2031 Transportation Improvement Program Presentation

Public Works Director D'Alessandro provided an overview of the City's annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a state-mandated six-year planning document required for transportation projects that seek federal or state funding.

He explained that while many projects are included due to funding obligations, others, such as pavement preservation, are not, unless tied to specific grants. The TIP also plays a role in guiding the City's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget planning and aligns with Council's priorities, particularly safety and active transportation initiatives.

Public Works Director D'Alessandro highlighted several funded and proposed projects, including pedestrian safety enhancements, intersection improvements, and the South George Washington Way overlay. He also referenced unfunded priorities such as the Gage Boulevard improvements and noted ongoing efforts to secure additional funding. He concluded by outlining the next steps for the TIP adoption.

Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet. Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with Public Works Director D'Alessandro throughout the presentation.

City Manager Amundson explained that the City is intentionally holding off on a public rollout for the Downtown Connectivity Project due to uncertainty surrounding approximately \$18 million in federal funding, which may be affected by changes in the federal administration. He emphasized that the City remains committed to transparency but is waiting for official confirmation of funding before launching public engagement.

Closing Comments

Mayor Richardson announced the upcoming Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Annual Conference, scheduled for June 25-27, 2025, in Kennewick at the Three Rivers Convention Center. She encouraged Councilmembers to attend and noted that the conference will feature breakout sessions tailored for elected officials, city clerks, city managers, and mayors. With an expected attendance of approximately 500 participants, she emphasized it as a valuable opportunity for professional development, networking, and exchanging ideas with peers from other municipalities. Mayor Richardson encouraged Councilmembers to respond promptly if interested.

Councilmember Jones shared observations from a recent visit to Howard Amon Park. She commended the park's appearance and noted it was heavily used over the weekend. However, she raised concerns about excessive litter and questioned the visibility and availability of garbage cans, and suggested adding more prominent signage to direct visitors to proper waste disposal sites.

She also inquired about vendors operating in the park and recommended that permitted vendors display visible signage indicating their authorization to ensure transparency and address public health concerns.

City Manager Amundson confirmed that most vendors operating in city parks have formal agreements with the City. He acknowledged that unauthorized vendors may occasionally appear, but park rangers maintain a strong presence and generally have the situation well under control. He added that established vendors are typically recognizable and authorized to conduct business.

Councilmember Jones then requested an update on a recent fire along Highway 182.

In conclusion, Councilmember Jones proposed exploring the idea of closing a street in the Parkway area near Howard Amon Park to create a pedestrian-friendly zone. Drawing inspiration from a similar setup in Walla Walla, she highlighted the opportunity to support local businesses and foster a greater sense of community. She noted that some businesses have expressed interest in expanding outdoor seating but are limited by narrow sidewalks. With the area also serving as the site of the weekly farmers market, she encouraged Council and the Parks Department to consider this concept for future community and economic development.

City Manager Amundson proposed assigning the task to Mandy Wallner, the City's liaison to the Business Improvement District (BID), to engage with the group to gauge interest

and gather feedback to present to Council in a future update.

Future Workshop Agenda Items

None.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

APPROVED:



Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: June 3, 2025

DATE PUBLISHED: June 4, 2025

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