



MINUTES
Richland City Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, December 2, 2025
Richland City Hall ~ Council
Chambers 625 Swift Boulevard

City Council Regular Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

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

Welcome and Roll Call

Mayor Richardson welcomed those in the audience and expressed appreciation for their attendance.

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 Aust, Chief of Police Pilcher, Energy Services Director Whitney, Finance Director Allen, Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite, Public Works Director D'Alessandro, Development Services Director Rizzitiello, and City Clerk Rogers.

COUNCILMEMBER JONES MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER VANDYKE SECONDED THE MOTION TO EXCUSE MAYOR PRO TEM KENT. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmember Whitten led the Council and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Presentations

1. New Hires & Retirements

A video featuring four (4) new hires for the month of November was played for the audience.

New Hires:

- Nate Getten - Equipment Technician I, Equipment Maintenance Division
- William Karnesky - IT Developer/Integrator (Applications), IT Division
- Anthony Stewart - Parks & Recreation Aide, Recreation Division
- Michelle Zaragoza - Administrative Assistant, Fire & Emergency Services

Retirements:

- Samuel Grant - Police Officer, 22 years of service

Public Hearings

City Clerk Rogers read the Public Hearing and Public Comments procedures.

2. Proposed 2026 Budget and 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Plan, Ordinance No. 2025-33

Mayor Richardson opened the public hearing at 6:05 p.m. No testimony was offered. Mayor Richardson closed the public hearing at 6:06 p.m.

3. Proposed Amendment to the 2025 Budget in the General Fund, General Government Construction Fund, Golf Course Fund, Medical Service Fund, Workers Compensation Fund, Health Care Benefits Fund and Unemployment Fund, Ordinance No. 2025-38

Mayor Richardson opened and closed the public hearing at 6:06 p.m. No testimony was offered.

4. Proposed Amendment to Exhibit A of the Compensation Plan for Unaffiliated Employees - 2025 & Continuing, Resolution No. 2025-152

Mayor Richardson opened and closed the public hearing at 6:07 p.m. No testimony was offered.

5. Proposed 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the International Association of Firefighters Union Local 1052 - Battalion Chiefs, Resolution No. 2025-153

Mayor Richardson opened and closed the public hearing at 6:07 p.m. No testimony was offered.

6. Proposed 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the International Association of Firefighters Union Local 1052 - Rank & File, Resolution No. 2025-154

Mayor Richardson opened and closed the public hearing at 6:08 p.m. No testimony was offered.

Public Comments

The following individuals provided comments in support of Resolution No. 2025-146, which would authorize an option agreement with Atlas Agro, Inc. for 275 acres of real property located at 2100 Horn Rapids Road.

- Karl Dye, President and CEO of Tri-Cities Development Council (TRIDEC)
- Dan Holmes, President, North America of Pacific Green Fertilizer (Atlas Agro, Inc.)
- Diahann Howard, Executive Director of the Port of Benton
- Seth Worley, Government Affairs Director of Central Washington Building Trades and UA Local 598

Other public comments were provided by the following individuals:

- Randy Slovic, Richland resident, encouraged the City to publish tourism and visitor information to highlight local attractions and local points of interest. She suggested that the City could better utilize volunteers to develop enhanced maps and visitor information materials.
- Brian Oldfield, Richland resident, commented on escalating safety and nuisance issues at Leslie Groves Park. He voiced support for Ordinance No. 2025-23, which modified park hours as a necessary step to improve safety and neighborhood quality of life.

Consent Calendar

City Clerk Rogers read the Consent Calendar.

Minutes

7. Approval of the November 18, 2025 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Ordinances - First Reading

8. Ordinance No. 2025-23, Amending Richland Municipal Code Section 9.22.075 related to Park Hours
9. Ordinance No. 2025-26, Related to Waivers of System Development Charges for Affordable Housing
10. Ordinance No. 2025-37, Providing for the Sale of 2026 Electric Revenue Bonds

Ordinances - Second Reading & Passage

None.

Resolutions – Adoption

11. Resolution No. 2025-148, Adopting the City of Richland's 2026 Legislative Priorities
12. Resolution No. 2025-149, Authorizing a Grant Application to the Blood Center Foundation of the Inland Northwest
13. Resolution No. 2025-150, Approving the 2026 Tri-City Regional Hotel-Motel Commission Budget and Marketing Plan
14. Resolution No. 2025-151, Authorizing Use of 2025 Tourism Promotion Area Reserve Account Funds for Supplemental Tourism-Related Projects in 2026

Items - Approval

None.

Expenditures – Approval

None.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER VANDYKE SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR AS PUBLISHED. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Items of Business

15. Resolution No. 2025-146, Authorizing an Option Agreement with Atlas Agro, Inc. for 275 Acres of Real Property Located at 2100 Horn Rapids Road

Development Services Director Rizzitiello provided an overview of the proposed option agreement with Atlas Agro, Inc., which allows both parties to complete due diligence before entering into a purchase and sale agreement. The Economic Development Committee (EDC) also reviewed the agreement and recommended approval.

Development Services Director Rizzitiello summarized key elements of the project:

- The land sale is estimated to generate approximately \$23.9 million.
- The proposed development includes five (5) data center buildings.
- The fertilizer facility project is eligible for the Targeted Urban Area (TUA) program,

while the data center is not.

- The project is estimated to generate approximately \$825,000 in ongoing annual property tax revenue.
- The electric utility occupation tax associated with the project is expected to generate approximately \$17 million over time based on projected power consumption.
- The project would be a key feature of the Northwest Advanced Clean Energy Park (NACEP), and would help advance the Triton substation project and transmission infrastructure.
- Upon completion, the data center project is expected to generate approximately 100 long-term jobs.

Energy Services Director Whitney noted that the City's average load is approximately 100 megawatts, with a peak load near 200 megawatts. The proposed Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) transmission line and substation capacity for the Horn Rapids/North Richland area is approximately 1,300 megawatts, roughly 13 times the City's average load and six times its existing peak.

Securing the project will provide a significant advantage in attracting future economic development amid competing regional demands for BPA transmission expansion. Under the Northwest Power Act, loads exceeding 10 average megawatts are required to bring their own power, so large new projects such as data centers would not increase retail rates for existing customers.

Following the presentation, Council offered comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

Councilmember Maier stressed the importance of establishing requirements such as closed-loop cooling to avoid uncertainty in the future, and Councilmember VanDyke requested that staff bring forward policy and regulatory options, including associated risks and project impacts.

City Manager Amundson added that staff are engaging with an owner's representative with expertise in data centers who can advise on best practices, pitfalls, and appropriate local requirements related to cooling, zoning, and other technical issues. Recommendations will be brought to Council in the coming year.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2025-146, AUTHORIZING AN OPTION AGREEMENT WITH ATLAS AGRO, INC. FOR 275 ACRES OF REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 2100 HORN RAPIDS ROAD. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

16. Resolution No. 2025-152, Amending Exhibit A of the Compensation Plan for Unaffiliated Employees - 2025 & Continuing

Human Resources Supervisor Mabe summarized proposed amendments to the compensation schedule for unaffiliated employees. She noted that a class and compensation study for all unaffiliated positions is underway and expected to be completed in May 2026.

Councilmember Maier commented that the 2026 Social Security Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) is approximately 2.8% and that the proposed adjustment is reasonable in relation to other governmental increases.

COUNCILMEMBER VANDYKE MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2025-152, AMENDING EXHIBIT A OF THE COMPENSATION PLAN FOR UNAFFILIATED EMPLOYEES – 2025 & CONTINUING. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

17. Resolution No. 2025-153, Approving the 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the International Association of Firefighters Union Local 1052 - Battalion Chiefs

Human Resources Supervisor Mabe provided an overview of the 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Union Local 1052 - Battalion Chiefs, which represents five (5) employees in the Richland Fire & Emergency Services Department. As part of the CBA, the union will withdraw a grievance previously certified for arbitration.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2025-153, APPROVING THE 2026-2028 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS UNION LOCAL 1052 - BATTALION CHIEFS. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

18. Resolution No. 2025-154, Approving the 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the International Association of Firefighters Union Local 1052 - Rank & File

Human Resources Supervisor Mabe provided an overview of the 2026-2028 CBA with IAFF Local 1052- Rank & File, which represents approximately 75 employees within the Richland Fire & Emergency Services Department. The agreement mirrors key terms in the Battalion Chief CBA. The union will also withdraw a related grievance previously certified for arbitration.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER VANDYKE SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2025-154, APPROVING THE 2026-2028 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS UNION LOCAL 1052 – RANK & FILE. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

19. Ordinance No. 2025-33, Approving the 2026 Budget and the 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Plan (Second Reading)

Finance Director Allen presented the final adjustments to the 2026 Budget and 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He noted that the majority of changes were minor and consist of interfund transfers and clean-up. The proposed total 2026 Budget appropriations for all funds is \$336,476,600.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2025-33, APPROVING THE 2026 BUDGET AND THE 2026-2031 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

20. Ordinance No. 2025-38, Amending the 2025 Budget in the General Fund, Streets Capital Construction Fund, General Government Construction Fund, Golf Course Fund, Medical Service Fund, Workers Compensation Fund, Health Care Benefits Plan Fund and Unemployment Fund (First Reading)

Finance Director Allen presented amendments to the 2025 Budget. \$5,568,232 in appropriations will be added to the 2025 Budget. Of this amount, \$2,883,232 is from new revenue sources and \$2,685,000 is from unappropriated fund balance. Budget adjustments include appropriations for the following funds: Fire and EMS Fund for unanticipated overtime, Streets Capital Construction Fund to spend grant funds for the Duportail Driveway Improvement project, General Fund to allocate appropriations into the correct funds and purchase land for a future fire station, and Health Care Benefits Plan Fund, Workers Compensation Fund, and Unemployment Fund for claims.

COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2025-38, AMENDING THE 2025 BUDGET IN THE GENERAL FUND, STREETS CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION FUND, GENERAL GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION FUND, GOLF COURSE FUND, MEDICAL SERVICE FUND, WORKERS COMPENSATION FUND, HEALTH CARE BENEFITS PLAN FUND, AND UNEMPLOYMENT FUND, FOR FIRST READING. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

21. Ordinance No. 2025-39, Amending Richland Municipal Code Section 14.24.060 related to Electric Retail Rates (First Reading)

Energy Services Director Whitney introduced Ordinance No. 2025-39, which proposes an 8.5% increase in the electric retail rates effective January 1, 2026. He explained that the increase is primarily driven by BPA's recent wholesale power increase of 8.9% for power and 19.9% for transmission, which now accounts for roughly 60% of the utility's total expenses.

Director Whitney noted that, aside from Schedule 90: Cable Television Amplifier/Small Cell, the City has not adjusted electric rates since June 2019. To manage rising expenses over the years, the Energy Services Department has reduced staffing, hired apprentices instead of journey workers where feasible, and maximized technology to reduce overtime and capital costs.

Consultant Angie Sanchez Virnoche, FCS Group Vice President, presented the findings of the Electric Rate Study. She stated that without a rate increase, the utility reserves would fall below policy minimums and be largely depleted by late 2026. An 8.5% rate adjustment in 2026 will maintain operating reserves, support current and future debt service, and fund approximately \$15.5 million in planned capital projects in 2026-2027.

Ms. Virnoche stated that even with the 8.5% rate increase, Richland's residential rates would remain in the lower tier regionally based on a recent comparative study. No changes to the rate structure are proposed at this time. Rate design will be reviewed in a cost-of-service and rate design study beginning in early 2026.

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

COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2025-39, AMENDING RICHLAND MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 14.24.060 RELATED TO ELECTRIC RETAIL RATES, FOR FIRST READING. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, LUKSON, MAIER, VANDYKE AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Reports and Comments

City Manager

City Manager Amundson reported on the following:

- Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce recently hosted the annual State of the Cities event. Representatives from Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, and West Richland presented their State of City addresses.

- Fire Chief Randy Aust was officially badged and sworn in on Monday, December 1, 2025. A retirement celebration will be held on Monday, December 8, 2025 from 9:00 -11:00 a.m. at the Richland Community Center to honor retiring Fire Chief Tom Huntington for his years of service with the City of Richland.
- The Winter Wonderland event will take place on Friday, December 5, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. at John Dam Plaza.
- Tri-Cities Legislative Day in Olympia will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. Logistics are pending due to weather conditions and calendar constraints. Council will receive additional information from Deputy City Manager Schiessl. Councilmembers interested in attending should contact staff as soon as possible to initiate the registration process.

City Council

Councilmember Lukson expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming Winter Wonderland event. He then congratulated Fire Chief Aust and thanked former Fire Chief Huntington for his years of service.

Councilmember Maier raised ongoing community concerns regarding enforcement issues in parks and traffic safety on major corridors such as north George Washington Way and Duportail Street. He noted specific incidents shared by residents and requested an increased focus on traffic enforcement and safety. He acknowledged that the Traffic Enforcement Unit is already active, but suggested further efforts may be needed to respond to resident concerns.

Councilmember Whitten congratulated Fire Chief Aust on his appointment and thanked former Fire Chief Huntington for his years of service. He encouraged citizens to attend the Winter Wonderland lighting ceremony on Friday.

Councilmember Jones suggested the City explore technology-based tools and code updates to more effectively enforce traffic and park issues in a cost-effective manner.

Councilmember VanDyke referenced resident concerns related to e-bikes, traffic, and park usage and emphasized the importance on relying on staff, who are subject-matter experts, to develop balanced solutions. He noted progress has been made through the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program and recent Council investments. Councilmember VanDyke also congratulated Fire Chief on his promotion, and thanked Mayor Richardson and City Manager Amundson for their great presentations during the Regional Chamber of Commerce event.

Mayor

Mayor Richardson spoke about her experience attending a ribbon-cutting event for a *Giving Machine* located at Fairchild Cinemas. The machine is a charitable vending

machine that allows users to donate to various local non-profit organizations. She encouraged the public to visit the machine before it is removed on December 10, 2025. Mayor Richardson then shared that a recent Investopedia article listed Richland among the top five (5) U.S. cities to retire.

Executive Session

22. Executive Session Per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g): Review Performance of a Public Employee (60 minutes)

At 7:36 p.m., Mayor Richardson announced that Richland City Council would convene in executive session for sixty (60) minutes to review performance of a public employee. A brief transition from the Council Chambers to the executive session room occurred, with the executive session beginning at 7:41 p.m.

Present with Council for the first half of the executive session was City Attorney Kintzley. At approximately 8:10 p.m., Council excused City Attorney Kintzley and invited City Manager Amundson to join for the remainder of the executive session.

Council exited the executive session at 8:36 p.m. No action was taken after the executive session concluded.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

APPROVED:


Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: December 16, 2025

DATE PUBLISHED: December 17, 2025