



**MINUTES**  
Richland City Council Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, February 3, 2026  
Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers  
625 Swift Boulevard

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**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 VanDyke	Present
Councilmember Holten	Present
Councilmember Jones	Present
Councilmember Maier	Present
Councilmember Samuel	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, Development Services Director Rizzitiello, and City Clerk Rogers.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke led the Council and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Agenda**

**COUNCILMEMBER JONES MOVED AND MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.**

**Presentations**

1. Swearing-In of Interim Councilmember Todd Samuel to Position No. 4 on the Richland City Council

City Clerk Rogers administered the oath of office to Todd Samuel, who was appointed as Interim Councilmember to Position No. 4 on the Richland City Council.

## 2. New Hires and Retirements

A video featuring the new hires for the month of January was played for the audience.

The City welcomed 18 new hires in the month of January.

- Jayden Scatton - IT Systems Administrator, Information Technology
- Leah Laughery - Human Resources Generalist, Human Resources
- Leonardo Gallardo - Police Officer, Police Services
- Mike Hayter - Police Officer, Police Services
- Clayton Rice - Police Officer, Police Services
- Lucas Anderson - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Masen Brown - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- David Buckingham - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Wyatt Flagg - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Braden Mooney - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Isaiah Murillo - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Grady O'Niel - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Aidan Renwick - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Jarrett Paullin - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Gabriel Schimpf - Firefighter EMT, Fire & Emergency Services
- Jonna Beem - Emergency Communications Dispatcher, SECOMM Operations
- Cassidy Clark - Emergency Communications Dispatcher, SECOMM Operations
- Jennifer Schouville - Emergency Communications Dispatcher, SECOMM Operations

There were no retirements to recognize.

### **Public Hearing**

None.

### **Public Comments**

City Clerk Rogers read the Public Comments procedure.

The following individuals provided comments:

- Miguel Barrios, Richland resident, requested City intervention regarding an ongoing nuisance condition at a neighboring household that has seven (7) cats. He reported that the cats have been allowed to roam freely throughout the neighborhood which has resulted in unsanitary conditions and repeated contamination of his property. Mr. Barrios stated that he has contacted the Richland Police Department, Tri-Cities Animal Control, and Code Enforcement to seek enforcement assistance, but was advised that limited action is available. Mr. Barrios requested that the City provide assistance to address the situation.

- Kristopher Dahir, Richland resident and Executive Director of the Columbia Basin Veterans Center (CBVC), explained that the Center's primary mission is to support and connect veterans to critical services, particularly in a region with a high concentration of veterans and limited local Veteran Affairs facilities. Mr. Dahir emphasized the importance of regional collaboration and extended invitations for a facility tour and the organization's upcoming *Stand With Us Gala* on May 1, 2026.
- Steve Lehto, an associate of the CBVC, described his role as a mentor coordinator for the Benton County Therapeutic Court. He highlighted the value of providing veterans with a non-adversarial court environment that promotes accountability, rehabilitation, and reintegration into the community. He also provided an overview of the CBVC's Coffee Bunker Northwest program, which meets three (3) times per month and offers veterans an opportunity to build and maintain supportive peer connections. Mr. Lehto invited councilmembers and staff to visit CBVC to learn more.
- King Mars, Richland resident and case manager of the transitional housing program at CBVC, explained that he oversees two (2) transitional homes that serve homeless veterans and veterans experiencing hardship. Mr. Mars noted that while some grant funding is received through the Department of Veterans Affairs, resources are limited. He emphasized the need for community partners and encouraged anyone with questions to contact him or visit CBVC.
- Jean Stava, Richland resident, referenced the January 20, 2026 City Council meeting, during which a presentation previewed law enforcement technology for the Richland Police Department. Ms. Stava expressed opposition to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate police reports, stating that AI tends to produce inaccurate or fabricated information. Ms. Stava urged City Council to exercise caution when considering any proposed use of AI for police report generation, and to conduct rigorous vetting before advancing such technology.

## **Consent Calendar**

City Clerk Rogers read the Consent Calendar.

## **Minutes**

3. Approval of the January 20, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes and the January 27, 2026 City Council Special Meeting and Workshop Minutes

## **Ordinances - First Reading**

None.

## **Ordinances - Second Reading & Passage**

None.

## **Resolution for Adoption**

4. Resolution No. 2026-11, Authorizing an Amended and Restated Southeast Regional Internet Crimes Against Children (SERICAC) Task Force Interlocal Agreement
5. Resolution No. 2026-12, Ratifying a Grant Application to Greater Health Now for Mobile Integrated Healthcare Program Funding
6. Resolution No. 2026-13, Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Cross Reiter, Inc. for Columbia River Shoreline Stabilization Design Services
7. Resolution No. 2026-14, Authorizing a Consultant Agreement with Parametrix, Inc. for 2026 Landfill Environmental Monitoring Services
8. Resolution No. 2026-15, Authorizing an Application to the United States Department of Transportation Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development Grant Program
9. Resolution No. 2026-16, Authorizing a Pre-Construction Funding Agreement with the Washington State Department of Commerce Public Works Board for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Anaerobic Digester Improvements Project
10. Resolution No. 2026-17, Authorizing a Service Agreement with Waltek II, Incorporated (d/b/a Intermountain Materials Testing) for Materials Testing Services
11. Resolution No. 2026-18, Authorizing a First Amendment to the Option Agreement with Washington Energy, LLC (**PULLED BY COUNCILMEMBER MAIER AND RELOCATED UNDER ITEMS OF BUSINESS**)

## **Items – Approval**

None.

## **Expenditures – Approval**

None.

**COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS AMENDED. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS HOLTEN, JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

## Items of Business

### 12. Resolution No. 2026-18, Authorizing a First Amendment to the Option Agreement with Washington Energy, LLC (**FORMERLY ITEM NO. 11 UNDER THE CONSENT CALENDAR**)

Councilmember Maier explained that he pulled this item from the Consent Calendar to allow a broader discussion of the amendment to the option agreement, and to gain a high-level understanding of where the project stands, how the amendment affects the overall process, and how it aligns with other related efforts. He emphasized that he did not oppose the amendment itself, but wanted to ensure transparency and confirm that appropriate oversight is occurring, so that Council and the public can have confidence in the process.

Deputy City Manager Schiessl replied that the amendment remedies minor technical deficiencies with the Original Agreement and exercises Washington Energy, LLC's first option extension, which allows additional time to perform due diligence. Deputy City Manager Schiessl confirmed that the amendment does not modify the payment schedule or other principal terms of the agreement.

**COUNCILMEMBER MAIER MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER HOLTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2026-18, AUTHORIZING A FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE OPTION AGREEMENT WITH WASHINGTON ENERGY, LLC. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS HOLTEN, JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

### 13. Council Assignments Process (Discussion Only)

At City Manager Amundson's request, City Attorney Kintzley provided an overview of the councilmember role as liaison to internal boards, commissions, or committees. She reminded Council that the council liaison role is codified in RMC 2.04.125, which provides that the primary role of a council liaison is to observe, convey Council policy or general consensus to the body when appropriate, and report back to Council regarding discussions, recommendations, and questions. City Attorney Kintzley stressed that council liaisons are not voting members of Richland's boards, commissions or committees, and should not attempt to participate in that capacity.

City Attorney Kintzley then noted that expectations differ for external boards, where councilmembers may be assigned to serve as voting members and must follow each organization's bylaws. Detailed information is outlined in Richland Municipal Code Section 2.04.125.

Using the information previously tallied by City Manager Amundson, Mayor Richardson presented each council assignment for councilmembers to consider, providing an opportunity to discuss the assignments and indicate preferred liaison roles. Individual

councilmembers identified preferred assignments and/or yielded their request to be assigned until all assignments were addressed.

At the conclusion of Council discussion, City Manager Amundson stated that the preferred assignments would be formally adopted by resolution at the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.

## **Reports and Comments**

### *City Manager*

City Manager Amundson had no comments.

### *City Council*

Councilmember Samuel reported that he attended his final meeting as a member of the Richland Planning Commission the previous week and found the discussion to be productive. He noted that Kadlec Regional Medical Center is considering a facility expansion that could provide meaningful benefit to the Tri-Cities community. He also stated that the Planning Commission continues to make steady progress on updates to the Comprehensive Plan, with work underway on several key focus areas.

Councilmember Holten commented that Richland continues to be a great place to live. She shared that she attended a "Carty" Party event at the Richland Library the previous Saturday, announced that the Richland High School boys' basketball team secured its 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive Mid-Columbia Conference Championship, and noted attending Hanford High School's theatre production of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Councilmember Holten concluded by encouraging residents to support local activities and emphasized that Richland offers many opportunities for fun and community engagement.

Councilmember Jones expressed ongoing concerns regarding the level of service currently provided by the Tri-Cities Animal Services (TCAS). She stated that the situation has deteriorated compared to times when animal control services were managed by independent contractors. Councilmember Jones noted that Council continues to receive frequent public comments about residents' unsuccessful attempts to obtain assistance from TCAS. She requested a dedicated, in-depth discussion, potentially in a workshop setting, to evaluate long-term solutions, including the possibility of moving away from the regional animal control model.

Councilmember Whitten also expressed interest in receiving a workshop-style presentation from TCAS to better understand the agency's current operations and performance. He encouraged the City's Code Enforcement division to evaluate and, if appropriate, take action regarding the cat overpopulation issue raised during the public comment period.

Councilmember Whitten expressed support for adoption of Resolution No. 2026-11, which now includes the City of Pasco in the Southeast Regional Internet Crimes Against Children (SERICAC) Task Force interlocal agreement. He emphasized the importance of expanding regional capabilities to address these types of crimes. He then commented on the use of AI for drafting police reports from body-worn camera footage, acknowledging both the potential benefits and the legitimate concerns. He indicated that he would support the cautious use of AI as a supplemental tool with appropriate human oversight, rather than as a fully automated process, and recognized the need to proceed carefully given the associated risks.

Councilmember Maier stated that the City may need additional legislative tools to address and resolve ongoing animal control issues.

Councilmember Maier also expressed concern regarding the increasing use of AI in government operations. While acknowledging that restricting access to AI tools is likely impractical, he indicated that transparency is important and requested information on what policies are being developed to address this issue on a city-wide basis.

In closing, Councilmember Maier thanked Chief Pilcher and City Manager Amundson for providing a comprehensive response to his prior inquiry regarding Flock database access limitations. He emphasized the importance of maintaining strong access controls and oversight for data-generating technologies to ensure responsible use and protection of the public.

Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke expressed appreciation for the City's ongoing efforts to support veterans, citing the positive impact of therapeutic courts, transitional housing, resource coordination, and the development of a new facility in Kennewick. He thanked staff and partners for their work, noting that these initiatives provide meaningful assistance to individuals in need throughout the community. Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke also welcomed the recent group of new hires in RPD and RFD. In closing, he welcomed Councilmember Samuel to the Richland City Council.

### *Mayor*

Mayor Richardson shared that councilmembers will begin receiving emails regarding schedules for various therapeutic court programs, including veterans, addiction, and mental health courts. She encouraged councilmembers to consider attending these presentations and graduations when their schedules allow, noting that the proceedings are particularly impactful and provide meaningful perspective on the work being done within these court systems.

In response to Councilmember Jones' comments regarding the Tri-Cities Animal Control Authority, City Manager Amundson advised that Deputy City Manager Schiessl is scheduled to attend the Tri-City Animal Control Authority (TCACA) meeting on February 12, 2026 and will report to Council the outcomes of that meeting. He characterized this as a meaningful first step in a positive direction and noted that Pasco's intentions are

aligned with addressing shared concerns among the partner cities. He further explained that, moving forward, the partner cities have committed to ensuring City Manager's Office-level representation at these meetings.

**Adjournment**

Mayor Richardson adjourned the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:



Theresa Richardson, Mayor



Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: February 17, 2026

DATE PUBLISHED: February 18, 2026