



Minutes
City Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 7, 2026
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 VanDyke	Present
	Councilmember Holten	Absent
	Councilmember Jones	Present (Remote via Zoom)
	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, Development Services Director Rizzitiello, Energy Services Director Whitney, Finance Director Allen, Fire Chief Aust, Human Resources Director Paulsen, Information Technology Director Goodhue, Chief of Police Pilcher, Public Works Director D'Alessandro, and City Clerk Rogers.

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Richardson led the Council and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

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

Presentations

1. Proclamation Recognizing Jonathan Allen for Setting the Washington State High School Boys Pole Vault Record

Mayor Richardson read a proclamation recognizing Jonathan Allen, a Hanford High School sophomore, for setting a new Washington state high school boys' pole vault record of 17 feet, 6 inches at the 2026 Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) State Track and Field Championship. Coach Crow spoke regarding Mr. Allen's accomplishment and athletic potential, and Mr. Allen's family stood with him to accept the City's recognition of his achievement.

2. 4th of July Update

Fire Chief Aust provided a public safety update on the holiday weekend. He recognized dispatchers from Benton County Emergency Services (BCES) for processing approximately 1,400 calls within a four-hour period at the 911 Dispatch Center. Fire Chief Aust reported there were no structure fires and no fireworks-related EMS calls or injuries reported. In conclusion, Fire Chief Aust recognized three (3) Richland firefighters who received the First Responder of the Year award from Toyota of Tri-Cities.

Chief of Police Pilcher reported on police activity for the holiday weekend, noting a decrease in fireworks-related calls from the previous year. He highlighted the use of drones as first responders, police assistance to fire personnel, traffic enforcement efforts, and one fireworks-related arrest.

3. New Hires and Retirements

A video featuring the new hires and retirement for the month of June was played for the audience.

New Hires

- Cameron Dayton - Journey Lineworker, Power Operations Division
- Cassie Martinez - Police Officer, Richland Police Department
- Emily Lyons - Customer Service Representative, Customer Service Division
- Phillip Smith - Engineering Technician III, Public Works Engineering Division
- Jonas Thompson - BCES IT Systems Administrator, BCES
- Michael Peña - Engineering Technician IV, Electrical Engineering Division

Retirements

- Robert Grubenhoff was recognized for his retirement after 21 years of service with the Richland Fire & Emergency Services Department.

Public Hearing

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

4. Proposed Surplus and Authorizing Relinquishment of Portions of Two Easements lying within Parcel 1 and 2 of Record of Survey No. 6256, Resolution No. 2026-93.

Mayor Richardson opened the public hearing at 6:20 p.m. No testimony was offered. Mayor Richardson closed the public hearing at 6:21 p.m.

Public Comments

The following individuals provided public comments:

- Francesca Maier, a Richland resident, encouraged the City to use data and professional analysis when determining placement of automated traffic enforcement cameras, and to consider discussing limiting their use beyond what is required by state law. She also shared that she taught a bicycle safety class for middle school students, *Smart Cycling for Tweens* at the Richland Public Library. She thanked RPL employee Mary Brown-Elmore for her support in coordinating the class.
- Melissa Abel, a Richland resident, requested the City place a ban on kratom. She expressed concerns regarding its availability and marketing, and shared a personal story involving a family member's use of kratom.
- Constance Muñoz, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers associated with the Atlas Agro project, and asked City Council to pause the process.
- Heather Sheldon, a Richland resident, requested a moratorium on data center construction, and expressed concerns regarding the utility infrastructure and public process.
- Jon Irvahn, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers and expressed concerns regarding energy use, water use, environmental and health impacts, and broader impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) technology.
- Kristine Williams, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of a data center in Richland and shared concerns regarding potential electricity costs and lack of community awareness.
- Ragan Faylor, a Richland resident, agreed with statements made regarding the proposed moratorium on the construction of data centers and suggested the City hold a town hall meeting to allow residents an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.
- Xavier Acuña, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers, and suggested the City focus on grid infrastructure, energy innovation, solar opportunities, and local jobs.

- Will Tram, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers and described Atlas Agro as a startup company. He suggested City Council slow the process and evaluate health, environmental, and grid impacts.
- Francine Pierce Saget, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers, and expressed concern regarding AI and impacts to the digital commons (shared digital resources).
- Terri Stewart, a Richland resident, submitted materials for City Council review and spoke regarding proposed policies related to power, water, financial security, stranded asset protection, transparency, and a potential moratorium on data center construction.
- Edward Muñoz, a Richland resident, questioned how residents and taxpayers would benefit from a data center in Richland.
- Jamie Stayrook, a Richland resident, submitted documents regarding Atlas Agro's land use application for property located at 21 Horn Rapids Road, and cited several possible associated risks and hazards relating to data centers.
- Kerri McKillop, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers and requested a moratorium to allow for due diligence regarding environmental and safety concerns.
- Donna Davis, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to the construction of data centers.
- Marlene, a Richland resident, agreed with comments opposing data centers and asked City Council to be more responsive on the issue.

Consent Calendar

City Clerk Rogers read the Consent Calendar.

Minutes

5. Approval of the June 16, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Ordinances - First Reading

None.

Ordinances - Second Reading & Passage

None.

Resolutions – Adoption

6. Resolution No. 2026-87, Authorizing Change Order No. 3 to the Construction Contract with Apollo, Inc. for Phase 2B - Landfill Development of the Horn Rapids Landfill Expansion - Phase 2 Project
7. Resolution No. 2026-88, Authorizing a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Ciara and Kyle Palmer in Support of the Downtown Connectivity Improvements Project
8. Resolution No. 2026-89, Authorizing a Consultant Agreement with J-U-B Engineers, Inc. for the Wastewater Management Plan Update
9. Resolution No. 2026-90, Authorizing a Grant Application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for funding through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant
10. Resolution No. 2026-91, Authorizing a Consultant Agreement with Beckwith Consulting Group for the Central Business District Wayfinding Master Plan
11. Resolution No. 2026-92, Authorizing a Horn Rapids Solar Site Power and Purchase Agreement with Horn Rapids Solar, LLC
12. Resolution No. 2026-94, Ratifying an Interagency Agreement with the Washington State Department of Ecology on behalf of Hanford Communities

Items – Approval

13. Appointment to the Parks & Recreation Commission: Eric Bostrom (Position No. 3, effective July 8, 2026 through March 31, 2028)
14. Appointment to the Richland Public Facilities District Board: Carol Moser to Position No. 1 and Steven Wiley to Position No. 2 (Both terms are effective July 16, 2026 through July 15, 2030)

Expenditures – Approval

None.

MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Items of Business

15. Ordinance No. 2026-16, Establishing Chapter 11.60 of the Richland Municipal Code related to Automated Traffic Safety Cameras

Assistant City Manager Florence presented the first reading of Ordinance No. 2026-16, explaining that the proposed ordinance would establish an enabling chapter in the Richland Municipal Code for an automated traffic safety camera program. He stated that adoption of the ordinance would not authorize the purchase, placement, or installation of cameras, but would allow staff to begin further analysis, vendor evaluation, procurement, and coordination necessary for a potential program. State law requires the passage of a local ordinance before an automated traffic safety camera program can be initiated.

Assistant City Manager Florence reviewed the purpose of automated traffic enforcement as part of a broader traffic safety strategy involving enforcement, education, and engineering. He summarized examples from other Washington jurisdictions and stated that staff intended to initially focus on speed-related cameras. He explained that next steps would include equity and traffic analysis to identify potential camera locations, vendor procurement, identifying staff resources, coordination with Benton County District Court, and program compliance with state and local law.

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

MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2026-16, ESTABLISHING CHAPTER 11.60 OF THE RICHLAND MUNICIPAL CODE RELATED TO AUTOMATED TRAFFIC SAFETY CAMERAS, FOR FIRST READING. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

16. Resolution No. 2026-93, Declaring Surplus and Authorizing Relinquishment of Portions of Two Easements lying within Parcel 1 and 2 of Record of Survey No. 6256

Public Works Director D'Alessandro presented the proposed relinquishment of portions of two easements. He explained that property owners requested the easement relinquishments to facilitate completion of a proposed land division. The easements to be relinquished include a portion of a No Access easement, which will be slightly modified through this action, and a Secondary Emergency Vehicle Access (SEVA) easement that will be relocated and reestablished.

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

COUNCILMEMBER SAMUEL MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2026-93, DECLARING SURPLUS AND

AUTHORIZING RELINQUISHMENT OF PORTIONS OF TWO EASEMENTS LYING WITHIN PARCEL 1 AND 2 OF RECORD OF SURVEY NO. 6256. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

Reports and Comments

City Manager

City Manager Amundson announced road closures for the See3Slam basketball tournament. He encouraged drivers to use alternative routes, follow posted detours, and use caution in the event area.

City Council

Councilmember Jones had no comments.

Councilmember Whitten thanked the public for their comments on the data center and responded to several points raised.

Councilmember Samuel thanked residents for attending and providing comments, and thanked Terri Stewart for submitting material during public comment. Councilmember Samuel reported on his experience standing in for Mayor Richardson at the Hampton Inn Richland's 30th anniversary ribbon cutting ceremony. He also announced that the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce will host a Regional Advocacy Roundtable titled *From Energy to Economy: Data Centers and Regional Growth* on Monday, July 20, 2026.

Councilmember Samuel reported that the Richland Planning Commission continues to work on the Comprehensive Plan update. He also reported attending an Arts Commission tour of public art in Richland. Finally, he reported attending the City's *Funding Opportunities* open house held at the Richland Public Library on June 24, 2026.

Councilmember Maier announced that Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) is fare-free for the month of July and that BFT will hold a public hearing on its Transit Development Plan on Thursday, July 9, 2026. Councilmember Maier then shared his views on data center development, distinguishing between mid-range facilities and large hyperscale data centers, and urged consideration of strong environmental protections, including restrictions on fossil fuel-based power generation and wastewater discharge for any future facility.

Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke thanked Melissa Abel for her comments regarding kratom and expressed interest in a future workshop discussion on the topic. He also addressed public comments regarding City Council demeanor and encouraged respectful discourse from the audience.

Mayor

Mayor Richardson thanked Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke for presiding in her absence. She commented on the patriotic production presented by Yes&Productions, thanked City staff for their work with the production, and noted positive comments received from the community.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVED:


Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: July 21, 2026

DATE PUBLISHED: July 22, 2026