



Minutes
City Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 21, 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	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, 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, Parks and Public Facilities Director Waite, and Acting Deputy Clerk Follett.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Approval of Agenda

COUNCILMEMBER JONES MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

Presentations

1. Friends of Badger Mountain Update

Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite introduced David Comstock, a member of the Friends of Badger Mountain Board of Directors. Mr. Comstock provided an update on

current projects and plans for development of Little Badger Mountain Park. He reviewed the proposed trailhead near Queensgate Drive and Gage Boulevard. Mr. Comstock explained that the City has applied for a \$1 million Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant.

He also discussed future phases of the master plan, including construction of a north face trail, access to the summit and the highest point within the City, and potential off-street parking near Morency Drive.

Mr. Comstock noted the RCO board is expected to award grant funds in August. He also described the organization's long-term *Ridges to Rivers* vision, a 50-mile trail system that would connect the ridge trail across Badger Mountain, Candy Mountain, and Red Mountain to the Yakima River, and ultimately the Columbia River.

Additional details can be found in the presentation saved with the agenda packet.

Public Hearing

Acting Deputy Clerk Follett read the Public Hearing and Public Comments procedures.

2. Proposed Amendment to Exhibit A of the Compensation Plan for Unaffiliated Employees – 2024 & Continuing

Mayor Richardson opened the Public Hearing at 6:23 p.m.

The following individuals provided testimony:

- Kristin Dykema, Richland Public Works Budget & Contracts Analyst, commended the City for completing the Classification and Compensation Study, but expressed concerns that implementation would place mid to senior level staff within the first quartile of their new pay grades, which she stated could harm employee retention and recruitment, increase reliance on outside consultants, and affect service delivery.
- Pat Everham, Richland Water Manager, spoke in support of the Classification and Compensation Study generally but suggested the City consider an alternative implementation methodology that would preserve employees' relative position within their pay grade ranges when transitioning to the new pay scale, in order to address employee turnover and equity concerns between existing staff and new hires. He urged Council to reconsider compensation for experienced employees.

Mayor Richardson closed the public hearing at 6:31 p.m.

Public Comments

The following individuals provided public comments:

- Constance Muñoz, a Richland resident, raised concerns regarding the condition and

maintenance of the disc golf course at Lawless Park, and requested Council increase the public comment time limit from two (2) minutes to three (3) minutes.

- Ryan (last name not given), a Richland resident and member of the Tri-Cities Socialists Party, objected to Council's conduct and comments made during the previous meeting.
- Kristopher Dahir, a Richland resident and Executive Director of the Columbia Basin Veterans Center, provided an overview of services provided to local veterans, including housing, therapeutic court support, resource assistance, and suicide-prevention connections. He announced that the organization received a \$150,000 state grant for transitional housing and invited community support.
- Stephen Drinkard, a Richland resident, raised concerns regarding high-speed and reckless e-bike use on shared-use paths, particularly by minors, and requested enforcement or other action to prevent serious injury.
- Ed Muñoz, a Richland resident, reviewed the history of Lawless Park and a golf disc tournament held in honor of Judge James Lawless. He requested City assistance to address poor conditions at Lawless Park.
- Karis Jonsen, a Richland resident, requested a moratorium on data center development and expressed concerns regarding climate change, drought, water supply, electrical-grid demand, and long-term environmental impacts associated with data centers.
- Jaime Stayrook, a Richland resident, asked councilmembers to consider a moratorium on data center development pending additional studies to determine long-term impacts.
- Megan Thompson, a Richland resident, commented that Coast Park also requires maintenance.
- Natalie Williams, a Pasco resident, stated that the City of Pasco passed a 6-month moratorium on data center development the previous evening, and urged Richland City Council to consider following suit.
- Heather Sheldon, a Richland resident, requested that Council consider a minimum one-year moratorium on data center development, and outlined proposed policy protections related to power generation, water, and environmental monitoring, and financial assurances to ensure residents do not bear the burden of a decommissioned data center.
- Angel Hunt, a Richland resident, voiced opposition to the construction of data centers and requested a moratorium. She also commented on Council's responsiveness to public comments on the topic.

- Kayla Madsen, a Richland resident, expressed concerns about individual infrastructure decisions being considered separately from the broader data center proposal and asked Council to consider the cumulative implications.
- Mikayla Wilson, a Richland resident, shared concerns expressed by indigenous elders regarding data center development.
- Ragan Faylor, a Richland resident, requested Council hold a town hall meeting with representatives of Atlas Agro and City staff to address community questions and concerns regarding the data center construction.
- Donna Davis, a Richland resident, spoke in opposition to data center development.

Consent Calendar

Acting Deputy Clerk Follett read the Consent Calendar.

Minutes

3. Approval of the July 7, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Ordinances - First Reading

None.

Ordinances - Second Reading & Passage

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

Resolutions – Adoption

5. Resolution No. 2026-95, Authorizing Separate Reimbursement Agreements for Street, Water and Sanitary Sewer Improvements constructed by Costco Wholesale Corporation
6. Resolution No. 2026-96, Authorizing Applications to the Washington State Department of Commerce Public Works Board for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Anaerobic Digester Improvements and Grit Works Rehabilitation Projects
7. Resolution No. 2026-98, Authorizing a Project Review Reimbursable Agreement with the Washington State Department of Transportation for the Thayer & Lawless Access & Right-of-Way Revision Project
8. Resolution No. 2026-99, Ratifying a Grant Application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Automated Permitting System

Demonstration Program

9. Resolution No. 2026-100, Authorizing a Grant Application to the Washington State Department of Commerce for a Permit Review Process Update Grant
10. Resolution No. 2026-101, Authorizing a Grant Application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care and Youth Demonstration Project

Items – Approval

None.

Expenditures – Approval

11. Expenditures from June 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026 for \$37,524,403.58 including Travel Checks Nos. 21065-21071, Accounts Payable Check Nos. 347621-348323, Accounts Payable Wire Nos. 11053-11094, Payroll Wires & ACH Nos. 15567-15628, Payroll Check Nos. 237694- 237698, and Payroll Direct Deposit Nos. 261540023839-261800025514

COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER HOLTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED. 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. 2026-102, Amending Exhibit A of the Compensation Plan for Unaffiliated Employees - 2024 & Continuing to Implement the 2025 Classification and Compensation Study

Human Resources Director Paulsen presented the proposed resolution, stated that the last comprehensive classification and compensation study was completed in 2017, and noted that the City engaged Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc. to benchmark City positions against public and private sector employers.

She reviewed the purpose and scope of the Classification and Compensation Study, the City's market-pay philosophy, benchmark methodology, peer and published survey data, and the resulting sequential 23-grade salary structure.

Director Paulsen explained that the study followed a "do no harm" methodology; no employee would receive a pay decrease, no salary range would be reduced, and employees below the new minimum would be moved to the minimum. The proposed ranges were aged forward to reduce the need for near-term market adjustments and

would place the City approximately 6% above the market median.

She also explained that implementation costs, which would be slightly less than \$400,000, were included in the budget and that employees would remain eligible for the separate year-end pay-for-performance process.

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

COUNCILMEMBER JONES MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER MAIER SECONDED THE MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2026-102, AMENDING EXHIBIT A OF THE COMPENSATION PLAN FOR UNAFFILIATED EMPLOYEES, 2024 & CONTINUING TO IMPLEMENT THE 2025 CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION STUDY. 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. Resolution No. 2026-104, Adopting the City of Richland Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan

Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite introduced the proposed Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Comprehensive Plan, noting the process was led by the City in partnership with consultants Lauren Scott and Cindy Mendoza of Moore Iaconfano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG), both of whom attended the meeting remotely via Zoom.

Ms. Scott, Parks & Recreation Planner and Project Manager at MIG, provided an overview of the proposed PROS Comprehensive Plan components, priority projects, and implementation strategies. She explained that the six-year plan provides a long-range roadmap for the City's parks and recreation system, evaluates existing conditions and access, identifies community needs and priorities, establishes goals and recommendations, and provides an implementation framework.

The presentation summarized the City's system of more than 2,800 acres across 64 sites, community engagement, and capital improvement projects. The Plan emphasizes reinvestment in existing facilities, accessibility, connectivity, natural-resource stewardship, diverse recreation opportunities, maintenance, partnerships, and balancing system growth with organizational capacity. Adoption of the Plan will maintain the City's eligibility for Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants.

Director Waite recognized Parks & Recreation staff, the Parks & Recreation Commission, City leadership, City Council, community participants, consultant, MIG for their work. He emphasized the quality and diversity of Richland's park system and the need to preserve existing assets while making thoughtful future investments.

Detailed information can be found in the presentation saved with the agenda packet. At the conclusion of the presentation, council and staff engaged in a question-and-answer

session.

COUNCILMEMBER HOLTEN MOVED AND MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE SECONDED THE MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2026-104, ADOPTING THE CITY OF RICHLAND'S PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. THOSE IN FAVOR: MAYOR RICHARDSON, MAYOR PRO TEM VANDYKE, AND COUNCILMEMBERS HOLTEN, JONES, MAIER, SAMUEL AND WHITTEN. THOSE OPPOSED: NONE. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

Reports and Comments

City Manager

City Manager Amundson addressed community concerns regarding the proposed Atlas Agro data center project. He stated that Council had authorized an option agreement for approximately 273 acres in the Northwest Advanced Clean Energy Park and clarified that the option agreement identifies an anticipated use for data center facility, but does not constitute a land sale, construction permit, or final project approval.

He stated that any purchase would require a separate purchase and sale agreement subject to Council approval, and that a moratorium is not legally available while the option agreement remains in effect. City Manager Amundson noted that Council has directed staff to include clear, binding, and enforceable conditions addressing electricity demand, water use, and other community concerns in any future purchase and sale agreement, in addition to existing federal deed covenants and restrictions on the property.

City Manager Amundson then announced the City's semiannual recruitment for several boards, commissions, and committees and previewed July 28, 2026 City Council Workshop topics. In conclusion, he recognized Parks & Public Facilities Director Waite and staff for their efforts on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan, and commended the multi-department team involved in addressing the Pullen Street property.

City Council

Councilmember Samuel reported representing the City at the Tri-Cities Cider House ribbon-cutting and proclamation ceremony on behalf of Mayor Richardson. He thanked residents who volunteer on City boards, commissions, and committees, and recognized the time and analysis they contribute to Council's decision-making.

Councilmember Holten reported attending the annual Association of Washington Cities conference in Spokane. She commented on Lawless Park and Judge James Lawless, and shared observations from recent travel regarding shade structures and urban trees that could inform planning at Richland parks.

Councilmember Jones thanked residents for providing feedback and encouraged

community members to apply for City board, commission, and committee positions.

Councilmember Whitten thanked the Friends of Badger Mountain for their presentation and stewardship of the trail system. He also voiced support for a town hall focused on data center development and commented on e-bike enforcement challenges. In conclusion, Councilmember Whitten thanked staff members for their work relating to community events.

Councilmember Maier reminded residents that Ben Franklin Transit services remain fare-free for the month July. He highlighted the broad range of Richland Public Library programming, reported attending his first Utility Advisory Committee meeting, and encouraged residents to apply to serve on a board, commission, or committee.

Mayor Pro Tem VanDyke thanked City Manager Amundson for addressing concerns regarding data centers, provided an update from the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the Veterans Cemetery project, and discussed recent state legislation related to e-bikes and the ongoing enforcement challenges.

Mayor

Mayor Richardson shared that she recently participated in a Rodel Institute meeting, where elected officials from across the state convened to discuss issues of mutual interest. She also highlighted the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments' Summer Planning Academy for high school students, and discussed budget challenges facing cities throughout Washington.

Mayor Richardson concluded by thanking attendees for their comments regarding data centers and assured residents that City Council remains engaged and attentive to community feedback.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

APPROVED:


Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: August 5, 2026

DATE PUBLISHED: August 6, 2026