



Minutes

City Council Retreat
Friday, July 24, 2026
Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

City Council Retreat – 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Richardson called the Council retreat to order at 8:00 a.m.

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, and Public Works Director D'Alessandro.

Agenda Items

1. Effective Governance Discussion

City Manager Amundson introduced Matt Lehrman of Principal Social Prosperity Partners.

Mr. Lehrman facilitated a discussion regarding effective governance, communication, mutual expectations, and the respective roles of the City Council and City staff. He explained that the retreat was intended to identify general areas of alignment and provide direction for future discussions.

Council reviewed the distinction between its policy-setting role and staff's administrative role. Council affirmed that it establishes community outcomes, policies, priorities, and budgets, while City Manager and staff determine how to implement that direction.

Mr. Lehrman provided a high-level overview of the Councilmembers' Predictive Index results and discussed how differing work styles may affect communication, deliberation, and decision-making.

Council identified public trust and communication, public safety, infrastructure, economic

development, and traffic safety as immediate areas of interest. Staff identified the Downtown Loop, code enforcement, the police station, and data center-related matters as current priorities.

Council concluded that continued communication among councilmembers, staff, and the community is essential to alignment, effective decision-making, and public trust. Mr. Lehrman encouraged Council to remain quick to ask questions, slow to judge, and willing to seek understanding before taking a position on a matter.

2. Key Project Updates

Police Station

Deputy City Manager Schiessl presented an update regarding conversion of the City-owned property located at 1200 Jadwin Avenue into a modern police station. The preliminary project schedule anticipates design-build procurement, construction, commissioning, and occupancy by late 2029 or early 2030. The estimated remaining project cost is approximately \$42 million, with financing recommendations to be developed for consideration during the 2027 budget process.

Staff will continue site cleanup and winterization, seek state design-build authorization, retain an owner's representative, obtain a second structural opinion regarding the parking deck, and evaluate a possible land exchange that could improve site access and support a future fire station. Staff will also explore public-safety training uses, compatible tenants, grant opportunities, and the timing and strategy for redevelopment of the existing police station and former City Hall properties.

Waste Tire Pile Abatement

Development Services Director Rizzitiello reported that the approximately 280,000-cubic-foot waste tire pile at 2990 Twin Bridges Road is the largest active tire pile in Washington and presents structural, environmental, and wildfire risks. The City secured approximately \$3.2 million in state funding for abatement that must be expended by June 2027.

Staff is seeking court authorization to proceed with abatement and is negotiating with the State's contracted tire-removal vendor so removal can begin promptly. Tires would be transported to an authorized regional facility. Staff will also complete environmental site assessments, pursue additional funding if costs exceed the current award, and record a lien against the property as legally appropriate.

Downtown Loop

Public Works Director D'Alessandro provided an update regarding the Downtown Loop project, including project scope, funding, design, construction sequencing, pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, branding, wayfinding, parking, and business access. Staff described ongoing outreach through the project website, direct business communication,

public meetings, and other communication channels.

Cybersecurity

Information Technology Director Goodhue reviewed improvements made following the 2024 cybersecurity incident, including strengthened security controls, network monitoring, backup capabilities, staff training, incident-response planning, and pursuit of state and federal grant funding. He noted that cybersecurity requires ongoing investment because threats and technology continue to evolve.

Cascadia Development - Tracts D and E

Development Services Director Rizzitiello provided an update regarding the proposed mixed-use redevelopment of Tracts D and E at Columbia Point. Staff is negotiating a development agreement with Cascadia Development and coordinating environmental review, Brownfield funding, public improvements, waterfront access, ribbon parks, potential structured parking, and other public-private components.

Duportail Corridor

Public Works Director D'Alessandro reviewed planned improvements along the Duportail corridor, including roundabouts at Kennedy Road and near the Queensgate commercial area, median and access-control changes, and capacity improvements at the Duportail Street/Queensgate Drive intersection. Staff discussed coordination with property owners, utilities, and adjacent development, as well as construction sequencing with the downtown loop project.

3. Strategic-Level Guidance

Lodging Tax Strategy

City Manager Amundson presented the City's current allocation of lodging tax revenues and proposed development of a comprehensive, long-term strategy addressing eligible tourism promotion, events, facilities, and capital investments. The strategy could also evaluate reserving funds, leveraging grants and partnerships, or using a sustainable portion of lodging tax revenue for debt service on a significant tourism-related investment.

Utility Rate Policy

Public Works Director D'Alessandro and Energy Services Director Whitney reviewed the City's existing utility rate-setting policy, reserve and debt-coverage targets, cost-of-service principles, capital planning, and the effects of delaying rate adjustments until larger increases become necessary. Staff proposed updating the policy and using a more predictable forecast-based approach.

Emergency Response

Fire Chief Aust reviewed how growth, redevelopment, increasing density, changing call locations, and specialized service demands are affecting emergency response. He discussed the need to build upon the existing station and deployment model through data-informed planning, property acquisition, capital equipment planning, staffing, and more tailored deployment strategies.

Public Comment Period

At the conclusion of the retreat, Council discussed whether there was interest in reconsidering the two-minute time limit for general public comment. Councilmembers expressed differing views regarding a possible three-minute limit and a total public-comment period. No action was taken.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the retreat at 4:30 p.m.

APPROVED:


Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: August 5, 2026

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