



CITY OF JOHN DAY
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES August 12, 2025

COUCILORS PRESENT:

Sherrie Rininger, Mayor
Chris Labhart, Councilor
Bradley Hale, Councilor
Ron Phillips, Councilor
Vern Pifer, Councilor
Heather Swank, Councilor

COUNCILORS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT:

Melissa Bethel, City Manager
Henry Hearley, Contract Planner

Agenda Item No. 1—Call Meeting to Order

The City Council meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm.

Agenda Item No. 2—Pledge of Allegiance

The City Council stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item No. 3—Roll Call and Attendance

All councilors were present.

Agenda Item No. 4—Amend or Accept Regular Agenda

Councilor Labhart made a motion to approve the agenda as published. The motion was seconded by Councilor Swank and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 5—Public Comments

John Rowell: Mr. Rowell expressed how appreciative he is of the improvements that have been made within the City.

Agenda Item No. 6—Consent Agenda

- a. Accounts Payable through 7-22-25
- b. Minutes of City Council Meeting 7-8-2025

7/8/2025 Council Minutes- On Agenda Item No. 10 Councilor Labhart would like to state a letter in support of the Grant County Library was approved by Council. Council also discussed transient room tax and the community development fund and would like to see that added into the minutes as well.

Councilor Labhart made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the changes made to the minutes of July 8, 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phillips and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 7—Discussion and possible appointment of vacant council position

- a. William “Bill” Coombs
Mr. Coombs withdrew his name from consideration due to personal reasons.

b. Meloni Cochran

Mrs. Cochran introduced herself to Council and is currently the Chairwoman of the John Day Senior Center, she put her papers in for the Grant County Senior Advisory Council and is current on the John Day Budget Committee.

Councilor Pifer made a motion to appoint Meloni Cochran to replace Eric Bush' Council seat. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hale and passed unanimously.

Councilor Hale made a motion to have City Manager give the Oath of Office to Meloni Cochran for the vacant council position. The motion was seconded by Councilor Labhart and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 8—Public Hearing (file# SDR 24-01)

The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is requesting Site Design Review for the new construction of the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site and Interpretive Center, OPRD also requests the vacation of two historic easements on the same site; a historic setback and a waterline easement that is no longer needed. This application is being elevated to a type IV land use review. The Planning Commission recommended approval with conditions:

a. Staff Report

Hearley provided the staff report and discussed the conditions of approval. Staff recommend that the City Council approve the application for Site Design Review and the vacation of two easements, subject to the findings contained in this staff report and the conditions of approval.

b. Applicant Presentation

The Construction Project Manager for the Kam Wah Chung Interpretive Center Project gave a presentation regarding the project description, the proposed site plan and the building plan.

c. Open the hearing

Mayor Rininger opened the public hearing.

d. Public Testimony

Louis Provencher brought up concerns regarding the airport setbacks. Hearley stated he sent all application materials to the airport and hasn't heard any concerns from them. Heidi Slaybaugh, an architect from Cole Architects wanted to clarify that they are not getting rid of a historic setback they are aligning the two by releasing the one Grant County had listed in 1967.

e. Applicant Rebuttal

There was no rebuttal from the applicant.

f. Close Public Hearing

Mayor Rininger closed the public hearing.

g. Deliberation

No deliberation.

Councilor Swank made a motion to approve the application for Site Design Review and the vacation of two easements, subject to the findings contained in this staff report and the conditions of approval listed below. As the City Council is the highest local approval authority, any appeal of its decision must be filed with the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. If the applicant disagrees with a particular finding or condition, it is their responsibility to rebut that finding or condition. In such a case, the applicant may consider requesting that the City Council leave the record open to allow for the submission of additional evidence or testimony before a final decision is rendered. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pifer and passed 5-2 with Councilor Hale and Councilor Cochran abstaining.

Agenda Item No. 9—Ordinance No. 25-05; An Ordinance of the City of John Day repealing Ordinance No. 3-68, which Ordinance imposed certain restrictions on improvements near the Chinese museum building.

Councilor Labhart made a motion to pass Ordinance No. 25-05. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phillips and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 10—Community Grant request for Hope 4 Paws

Paul Smith spoke on behalf of Hope 4 Paws. He thanked Council for their 2024 contribution. Before the current fiscal year budget was approved, Hope 4 Paws submitted a grant application for \$1,700 for FY 25-26.

Councilor Labhart made a motion to donate \$1,500 out of the community grant budget to Hope 4 Paws. The motion was seconded by Councilor Swank and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 11—Resolution No. 25-07; A Resolution establishing a temporary improvement advisory committee for city owned property located at 117 SW Canton Street

Councilor Hale made a motion to approve Resolution No. 25-07; A Resolution establishing a temporary improvement advisory committee for city owned property located at 117 SW Canton Street. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cochran and passed unanimously.

The committee shall consist of up to seven members, including two City Council members. Councilor Labhart and Councilor Swank are interested in being on this committee. The remaining members shall be appointed by the Mayor with the consent of Council and may include residents, business owners, or stakeholders with an interest in downtown improvements.

Agenda Item No. 12—Park Bench donation in honor of Fritz Phillips

The City has received a request from friends of Fritz Phillips to donate a memorial park bench in his honor. Council decided to hold off on this until they have more clarification on exactly where this park bench would be placed.

Agenda Item No. 13—City Manager Comments

The City will have a booth in the pavilion down at the Grant County Fair if Councilors wanted to sit down there.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant is continuing to move forward.

Bethel congratulated Mr. Loyd in Public Works for getting his Utility 2 certification.

Agenda Item No. 14—Mayor and Council Comments

Councilor Labhart informed Council he will be remote at the meeting on August 26th.

Adjourn:

There being no further business before council the meeting was adjourned.

Melissa Bethel, CM