

CITY OF JOHN DAY  
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES January 13, 2026

**COUCILORS PRESENT:**

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

**COUNCILORS ABSENT**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Melissa Bethel, City Manager  
Don Gabbard, Fire Chief

**Agenda Item No. 1—Call Meeting to Order**

The City Council meeting was called to order at 6:30 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**

Agenda Item No. 11 was added to the agenda to address the JDCC Parks and Recreation utility bill.

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

**Agenda Item No. 5—State of the City—Mayor Rininger**

Mayor Rininger presented her State of the City address to the community, highlighting the past year's accomplishments, addressing current challenges, and outlining goals for the upcoming year.

**Agenda Item No. 6—Public Comments**

Paul Smith: He spoke about downtown enhancement and offered suggestions for improving its appearance, including support for the upcoming sculpture as an attraction.

Richard LaMountain: He is a part of the Grant County Change Alliance, and announced a Meet the Artist event for the Promised Land sculpture on January 31 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the Elks Lodge and invited the public to attend.

Mayor Rininger: Mayor Rininger commented that the Council pays for their own water and sewer and stated Council would not support raising these rates if they did not share the same responsibility.

**Agenda Item No. 7—Consent Agenda**

- a. Accounts Payable through 12-22-2025
- b. Minutes of CC Workshop Meeting 12-3-2025
- c. Minutes of City Council Meeting 12-9-2025

***Councilor Phillips made a motion to accept the consent agenda as published. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cochran and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 8—Ordinance 25-06**

Ordinance No 25-06: An Ordinance amending the John Day Zoning Map for map and tax lot 13S-31E-23-01300 to increase the portion of the property zoned Parks and Reserve (PR) and decrease the portion of property zoned Residential Limited (RL).

Bethel stated that the Council has already made this decision and that the Ordinance will formalize the zone map change, which will be brought back for adoption once updated, marking the first step in finalizing the Grant County RV park. The Ordinance should actually be 26-01.

***Councilor Labhart made a motion to read Ordinance 26-01 by title only. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hale and passed unanimously.***

***Councilor Phillips made a motion to adopt Ordinance 26-01. The motion was seconded by Councilor Swank and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 9—Resolution 26-01; A resolution supporting the formation of a county wide library district**

***Councilor Cochran made a motion to approve Resolution 26-01; A resolution supporting the formation of a county wide library district. The motion was seconded by Councilor Labhart and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 10—Utility Base Rate Requirement for Connected Properties - Informational**

Bethel stated this agenda item is due to rate increases following a rate study tied to construction and treatment plant operating costs. She explained that all connected accounts must pay the base rate regardless of usage, as the system must remain operational. Staff is auditing all accounts, and the City cannot provide free or reduced services due to federal funding requirements. Any rate reductions for some customers would shift costs to others.

Tyler Sheedy: Mr. Sheedy stated that his downtown property has one meter serving 4 commercial and 8 residential units and expressed concern about being billed per unit regardless of occupancy, totaling approximately \$1,672 per month. He requested clarification on the City's billing audit and its timeline, and questioned how long current rates will remain in effect. He advocated for a usage-based billing system with one base rate per meter connection and charges based on actual consumption, rather than per-unit billing.

Councilor Labhart stated he has concerns, noting that there is only one meter and he believes properties with multiple dwellings on a single meter should be billed based on usage. Councilor Hale suggested working out an agreement with Sheedy, to help keep his rental properties profitable. Bethel stated the current rate structure is fair and cautioned against making individual deals.

**Agenda Item No. 11—JDCC Parks and Rec. Utility Bill**

***Councilor Cochran made a motion to allow the City Manager to negotiate with Parks and Rec. and sign any documents related for the property on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hale and passed unanimously.***

**Other Business:**

**Agenda Item No. 11—City Manager Comments**

- a. Next Meeting – IT change over  
Bethel has requested that the council cancel the next meeting in January due to the scheduled IT changeover.
- b. Discuss date for Goal Setting Retreat:  
Bethel will email Council goal setting session dates.

Bethel has been appointed by LOC to serve on the Taxation Committee and the Housing Policy Committee.

**Agenda Item No. 12—Mayor and Council Comments**

There is a Strategic Plan Town Hall January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026

The next Regular Meeting is February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Adjourn:**

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

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Melissa Bethel, CM