

**MINUTES OF THE CITY OF HEPPNER CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HEPPNER CITY HALL, 111 N. MAIN STREET, HEPPNER, OREGON
7:00 PM SEPTEMBER 8, 2025**

ATTENDEES:

**Corey Sweeney
Ralph Klock
Sharon Inskeep
Joe Armato
Ian Murray
Adam Doherty
Dale Bates (on zoom, did not vote due to bad connection)
John Doherty
Chad Doherty
Steve Rhea
Nathen Braun**

Absent: None

Members of the Public: Paul Lauritsen, Crysti Taylor, Elissen Yates, Ruth Eadler, Kellie Eadler, Kit & Shirley George, Richard Skou, Laurel Laney, Joe Miller, Keven & Shelli Haguewood, Dale Woods, Jessica Britt, Katie Murray, Emily Jack, Kim Cutsforth-Coil, Lindsay Grogan, Brandi Sweeney, Daron Havlik, Gus Peterson, Kenneth Wenberg, George Nairns, Rachel Payton.

On Zoom: Kaylee Thompson, Mariah Stephens, Jacob Stutzman, Autumn Morgan, Kelly Barnett, Andres DiSalvo (Heppner Gazette), Keenan Jack, Morrow County Rodeo.

1. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Call to Order. Corey Sweeney called the September 8, 2025, meeting of the City of Heppner City Council to order at 7:00 PM.

B. Pledge of Allegiance. Corey Sweeney led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

C. Announcements – None

D. Correspondence - None

E. Requests

1. Animal Permit: Mariah Stephens, 16 hens, 6 ducks, 1 goose at 327 Linden Way.

A picture of the new enclosure for the birds was included. The goats and emus have been rehomed. The dogs have been licensed.

Motion to approve the Animal Permit by Sharon Inskeep. Seconded by Joe Armato. Councilors Sweeney, Klock, Murray, Armato, Inskeep, and Doherty voted unanimously to approve. Motion Carried.

F. Presentations - None

2. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

John Doherty explained the format for public comments and that questions will not be answered during "Communications from the Public". It is a time for people to make comments and voice their opinions. It is not a Q & A or a Town Hall forum. Each person will have three minutes to speak. Questions can be directed to the City Manager during business hours.

Ruth Eadler lives next to Hager Park. She found out about the sale of the park two weeks ago. She isn't against the daycare but is extremely sad and thinks that the park is not the place for a daycare. The park is for everyone in the city. She was upset that she wasn't notified. How will this impact the neighborhood and their property values?

Kit George and his wife Shirley have lived on Hager Street for over 40 years. It is a pretty park that is used often. Selling a public park is setting a precedence that we do not need. The street is narrow and there isn't enough parking. He is not against the daycare but selling a park is not the right thing to do. It wasn't right that he wasn't notified.

Dale Woods had lived on Hager Street for 5 years. He enjoys the beautiful green space across the street and he is surprised that he wasn't notified about the sale and is in opposition to it.

Keven Haguewood read a letter from Kelly Hale. Her father Bob Kilkenny donated money for the park as a gift to future generations. This change alters the purpose of this space as it was originally intended. She requests that the space not be diminished and to be preserved as park use.

Keven Haguewood owns a property on Hager Street. He suggested that the community get together and clean up a spot that needs improvement to use for the daycare instead of putting it at the park. He would donate equipment and labor for it. This change will negatively impact the residents. The street isn't wide enough to accommodate the traffic. He should have been notified prior to this and is curious how the price for the land was figured and if it is in the best interest of the taxpayers.

Joe Miller lives on Hager Street. No one on the council lives in that area and doesn't understand how much it is used. The park should be for city use and shouldn't be sold, the council should be ashamed. He has nothing against the daycare but it should be somewhere else and not in the park.

Brandi Sweeney thinks it is a good use of public space. There are lots of people that are not opposed to it. The daycare has worked hard to find a location and this was the best

that they could do. This has been discussed publicly at several council meetings and she encourages people to look back at the minutes.

Kim Cutsforth was City Manager when the park was built. She got funds from Bob Kilkenny for only the Basketball Court which is not included in these plans. The rest of the improvements were city projects. The area used for soccer does not meet the criteria for official soccer games. Willow Creek Park District can take the soccer goals and use them at their park. The daycare worked very hard to find a space big enough that didn't have flood plain issues. The current daycare is in a residential area and there are no complaints. The basketball court and picnic area will still remain at the park. None of this is being done to destroy the neighborhood.

Paul Lauritsen is not opposed to the daycare but there should have been more outreach because this is a big deal.

Jim Kindle is excited about the daycare. Heppner never wants anything in "their" neighborhood. We need this facility.

George Nairns supports the daycare but is disheartened by the loss of green space. The daycare has been looking for options pre-COVID. They approached Hope Lutheran Church and they had an agreement, but COVID shut them down and due to regulations, it didn't work out. Later it was sold to Physical Therapy. Children will still be using the space but just differently.

Kellie Eadler grew up playing in Hager Park. It is heavily used by everyone. It is a valuable green space that the city is taking away. Putting a daycare there is frivolous as Heppner isn't growing enough to justify something like this. They should look into locating it somewhere else. There are plenty of trashy houses that could be torn down. What are you going to do when teenagers have one less park to be at? It's a bad idea.

Crysti Taylor used to play at Hager Park. She just found out about this a few days ago. Many people are opposed to losing a green space. Other options should be explored, and the community needs to come together to figure this problem out.

Elissen Yates likes the park and goes there a lot, it would be hard if it were to go.

Richard Skou was never notified; anyone would want notice of this. His family often uses the big open area to play ball. It is unfair as there was no notification.

Rachel Payton moved here just over a year ago and lives two blocks from the park. She knew about the daycare a few months after she moved here. If you didn't know about this, it's your fault. Her family uses the park a lot, but it is very rare to see people using the proposed area. This is a good compromise. We need these resources for working families and it is needed if you want the community to grow.

John Doherty commented that a contract has not been signed yet as there is not a complete legal description for the lot that will be created.

Corey Sweeney invited anyone that has questions to visit the office during business hours and talk to the City Manager.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. August 11, 2025, City Council meeting minutes.

Motion to approve the minutes by Adam Doherty. Seconded by Ian Murray. Councilors Sweeney, Klock, Murray, Armato, Inskip, and Doherty voted unanimously to approve. Motion Carried.

B. Approval of Monthly Bills

Motion to approve the monthly bills by Adam Doherty. Seconded by Ralph Klock. Councilors Sweeney, Klock, Murray, Armato, Inskip, and Doherty voted unanimously to approve. Motion Carried.

C. Financial Statement – For information only.

4. REPORTS

A. Fire Chief Report – Steve Rhea read the report.

- 1 Lift Assist
- 4 Secure Landing Zone
- 2 Combine/Field Fires, Mutual aid to lone
- 1 Smoke Check Rural
- 1 Mutual aid for North Gilliam County field fire
- 3 Alarm Activations in the City
- 4 Motor Vehicle Accidents, non-injury
- 1 rekindle of Grass fire at rodeo grounds
- 1 Flood Assessment
- 1 Motor Vehicle Accident cancelled enroute
- 109 calls for 2025
- 23 Chief Calls for the month

Burned the hillside around the parking area at the rodeo grounds. Burned the hill around the landing zone behind houses on Gilmore Street. Notified by State Farm we will receive a \$10,000 Grant for radios. Completed the July monthly report to OSFM for Tac Tender. Took the fire hose to A-1 Industrial for repair. Burned the pasture between homes on Hwy 74.

B. Morrow County Sheriff's Department – Nathen Braun read the report. There were 438.50 hours for August. Dog calls are about the same. There were 11 traffic stops, 8 warnings and 3 citations. 294 total incidents. Two deputies just got back from the academy and will be in training for about 14 weeks. The new lateral hire Sargent is now working solo.

C. Public Works. Chad Doherty read the Public Works report.

Water Dept. – Replaced 10 water meters. Fixed a mainline leak on the air release valve near Skinner Creek. After hours call out for blown water meter at the City Yard. Shut off and fixed the next day. Replaced the hydrant at the City Yard. After hours call out for a possible leak at Summit Drive. Replaced one broken meter box. Distributed Consumer Confidence Report to public/business locations in town.

Sewer Dept. – Cleaned the contact basins three times. Completed 7 septic dumps. Emergency lift pump replacement on the trickling filter pump. This involved quickly placing the trash pump in the TF sump and discharging it in the trickling filter. Cleaned the contact basins after the lift pump was replaced. Wildcat Electric replaced a starter and contactor on Lift Pump #2 at treatment plant. Ordered new check valves and a gate valve for the TF lift pump. Replaced the gate valve and the check valve on lift pump #2. Attended a mixing zone study with John, Anderson Perry and DEQ. Replaced the float on the right side of the effluent pump. Hauled 17 loads of biosolids. Took the sludge truck to Bailey's to replace the axel seals. This caused a two-week breakdown.

Streets Dept. – Painted the shamrock. Replaced the stop bars that were covered during the chip seal project. Blew off the Main Street sidewalks and swept Main Street for the rodeo parade. Cleared brush on the north side of Matlock Street Bridge. Removed puncture vine in the Chase Street lot. Cleaned trash, removed weeds and leaves on the Barratt Blvd. guardrail. Set up and took down cone barricades for Morrow County Rodeo Parade. Set up barricades for no parking fire lane on Fairview Way. Removed the rodeo banners. Removed a deer that was hit near the pool. Installed a flower basket drip system on the light pole near Les Schwab. Replaced the air bag pressure sensor on the sweeper that was preventing the hopper from dumping.

Parks. – Installed a locking cover over the outlet behind the library. Trimmed trees at Memorial Park that were encroaching on a street sign and leaning over the bridge. Repaired the teeter totter at Hager Park that had broken off at the spring.

Park District – Shut down the heater but continuing to monitor the pool until shutdown. Fixed a broken irrigation line at the pool. Worked with the Park District to get their zero-turn picked up by RDO for service and repairs.

Shop/Other Dept. – Took the 2016 RAM to Pioneer for the third time for a broken transmission.

D. City Manager Report – John Doherty read the City Manager Report.

1. Anderson Perry – Began bi-weekly meetings with Dane Maben and Chad to discuss ongoing projects. Mixing Zone Study, Gilmore St project, and Public Works Standards continue as main topics.
2. POM – Attended monthly meeting via Zoom. Had conversation with Port Commission President Murray regarding potable water to former mill site. Port moving forward with well drilling at site. Flood mitigation work to begin in near future.
3. CIS/Heppner Fire Dept – Continued work on claim for Fire Department #531. Vehicle inspection is total loss. Awaiting final valuation of vehicle for budgeting purposes for purchase of replacement vehicle.
4. City Park – PW installed locked outlet cover on east wall of library. Lack of access to charge electronics has lessened loitering and littering in this area. Ordered signs informing of Park rules and surveillance.
5. Timecard Plus – Multiple meetings with TCP, Heather, and Chad as we move closer to implementation of app/web based timecard system for employees. Training of administrators and configuration were main topics.
6. ODOT – ODOT Bridge department completed Main St Bridge abutment work to lessen erosion to private property. Attended NEACT meeting via Teams, main topics were what the state of maintenance will be if Legislature does not pass Transportation Bill with full funding requirements for staffing and maintenance.
7. Legislature: Reviewed Transportation Bill documents for Oregon Legislature 2025 Special Session. Drafted and sent letters to Senator Nash and Representative Smith highlighting areas important to cities and Eastern Oregon. Had in-person meetings with Senator Nash and Representative Smith to discuss Bill more in-depth.
8. US House of Representatives: US Representative Cliff Bentz held meeting at City Hall on August 27th (regarding agriculture and land use topics, attended by local farmers and ranchers.) I had the opportunity to speak with Representative Bentz after his portion of the meeting concluded.
9. Kenny Land Surveying – Multiple meetings with Matt Kenny regarding (1) research of historical property deeds and City Ordinances involving Hager Park and street vacations and (2) potential future rental of office space within City Hall.
10. Heppner Daycare/Hager Park sale: Had meetings with Katie Murray and Matt Kenny regarding survey work and legal description for partition of land. Handled complaints received regarding sale of park land. Advised residents of notification procedures regarding City Council sessions, publications, meeting minutes, and date/time of upcoming City Council meeting. Reviewed ORS pertaining to City property sales.
11. Kuhn Law – Consulted with Bill Kuhn regarding applicability of ORS regarding property sales.
12. MCPW – Met with Eric Imes regarding chip sealing, and invoicing of work by City of Heppner benefitting MCPW.

13. Reviewed payroll, bank reconciliations, and bills. Worked with Heather on allocation and labelling of funds in FY26 Budget. Followed up with payees on outstanding checks. Processed final Granite payment for Chip Seal.
14. Planning – Met with contractor regarding placement of new manufactured home. Worked with Kim C on application for duplexes in Lakeview Heights for Willow Creek Valley Assisted Living. Completed Staff Study, Public Notice, and publication requirements for Variance application for upcoming September 15th Planning Commission meeting. Met with resident regarding code for decks. Conversation with property representative regarding ADU & Cluster Development on multiple properties, provided Code and opportunity for future meeting/discussion.
15. WCVEDG – Attended monthly meeting.
16. CREZ III – Discussed bylaws with Interim CREZ Manager Sykes, reviewed bylaws, attended August CREZ III meeting.
17. PW – Work with Chad on tree trimming for clear vision of highway signs, Dodge 2500 Utility ongoing mechanical issues, various parks issues, sidewalk repairs, Hunter's Water, Sewer Plant mechanical issues, City Hall electrical (relating to Dickenson Chiropractic office,) visited resident with questions regarding improvements and potential conflict with Gilmore St Project.
18. LOC – Completed Franchise Fee Survey with assistance on Heather.
19. IT – Work with Hermiston IT regarding backup internet solutions in wake of recent Blue Mountain Network outages that affected water distribution and office productivity.
20. USACE – Contacted for update on 2025 Flood Survey. Asked for AP and Chad to be included in Willow Creek Dam release emails for Mixing Zone Study research.
21. DEQ – Attended Mixing Zone Study update meeting.
22. MCSD – Upcoming meeting with Wenaha Group (Project Manager for Bond improvements,) to discuss future improvements and HHS/HJHS.
23. Code enforcement – Continued work on open complaints (animal permitting and fire hazards.) Contacted owner of dogs at large. Researched several complaints where findings were not in violation of code. Received complaint regarding illegal dumping in stream. Worked with MCSO Deputy Haney and spoke with property owners on enforcement. Letters to be mailed week of September 8th, pending compliance.
24. MCSO – Work with Deputy Haney on code enforcement, completing trespass of individual from City Park, abandoned vehicle.
25. CRS/Floodplain: Begin compilation of documents for yearly reporting requirements. Contacted permittee for final Elevation Certificates on finished build(s,) and reviewed Elevation Certificates for N Main, Riverside, and Chase Street properties for current and potential future development.
26. Fire Department – Worked with Chief Rhea and Heather regarding grant fund spending, expense reimbursement, and future grant expenditures. Discuss replacement of #531 with Chief
27. Council Packet - Draft Manager's Report and distribute Council Packets.

5. BUSINESS

A. Old Business

1. Heppner Daycare – Hager Park Update

The legal description for the agreement is not complete; there has not been a sale yet. They have the first set of plans. They are working with Willow Creek Park District to find a new location for a soccer area. The new facility will have a large parking lot and a drop-off loop to help alleviate traffic congestion. The parking area will be open to the public after business hours. The facility will be able to serve up to 68 children. The current facility serves up to 30 with 20 being preschool age. They still have a waiting list. It is very unlikely for this kind of grant to be available at any time in the future. The grant application period begins on September 17th and closes at the end of the year. They have an agreement with the city to maintain the area as a park until they can break ground.

B. New Business

1. Work Session

The City Council work session is scheduled for Friday September 12th at noon. The Gilmore Street project, Dane Maben from Anderson Perry will be here. Also a discussion about possible Ordinances will be on the agenda.

2. Fire Department Replacement Vehicle

This vehicle wasn't being used for fighting fire when it was damaged. The vehicle caught fire due to mechanical failure. The repairs for the 531 Engine were estimated to be around \$40,000. The undamaged equipment can be installed on a new vehicle. The estimate for a new vehicle is \$65,137.60 for the cab and chassis. The new vehicle should be a crew cab diesel. It will be able to carry more gear and personnel, and a diesel will be better suited for fire conditions. The delivery time is 12-16 weeks. The lights will need to be updated which will cost about \$10,000. The insurance check from CIS will be \$27,844.00. That leaves about a \$38,000 gap and if we add lights that's \$48,000. There is \$40,000 in Fire Capital Equipment and \$30,000 in Reserves. Funds can be moved out of contingency by Resolution if needed. The council agreed to move forward with purchasing the vehicle.

7. MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETINGS – For Information only

8. REPORT FROM CITY ATTORNEY – Bill Kuhn researched property sale requirements by request of the City Manager. City property is allowed to be sold by statute for Special Public Needs. No advertising or public hearings are required. The council is on track for this transaction.

9. REPORT FROM MAYOR, CITY COUNCILORS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.