

The City of Portland  
City Council  
February 17, 2026  
5:30 PM

City Council was called to order by Mayor Jeff Westlake at 5:30 PM on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Roll was called and present were members Matt Goldsworthy, Mike Aker, Ashley Hilfiker, Ron May, Kent McClung and Dave Golden. Also, present were Attorney, Wes Schemenaur, Clerk-Treasurer, Lori Phillips, and Rob Weaver (WPGW).  
Absent: Michele Brewster

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Approval of City Council minutes from February 2, 2026**

Motion by May, seconded by Aker to approve the City Council minutes from February 2, 2026 as presented. Roll call vote. All voted aye.

### **Ceann Bales, JCDC Executive Director – Presented Quarterly Report**

### **Scott Swingley, President of the July 4<sup>th</sup> Committee – Request for funds**

This year, the USA celebrates 250 years. The July 4<sup>th</sup> Committee is requesting funds to bring new and exciting event for Portland. They are working on many options, and in order to move forward with planning, they have asked for a sponsorship of the events. Mayor Westlake and Council both pledged sponsorship from each of their promotion funds. Motion by May, seconded by McClung to donate \$1,000 from the Council Promotion fund and \$2,000 from the Mayor Promotion fund. Roll call vote. All present voted aye.

### **Discussion – Centralized Dispatch**

Motion by May, seconded by Hilfiker to add to the March 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda the discussion of hiring a consultant to do the study for centralized dispatch. Roll call vote. All present voted aye.

Discussion as follows:

McClung stated that the question surrounding centralized dispatch is; “is this the best way” and “we are not getting that answer”. Are services being duplicated? The council is asked to approve a budget without knowing if we are getting what we are paying for. He noted that the council has two (2) options. Option #1 could be to pass a resolution to do the study; which the mayor could veto. The council could then override the mayors veto with a 2/3 majority vote. Option #2 could be for the council to hire an expert to do the study (without mayor or BOW signature). RFP’s would have to be advertised and bids taken. There is the risk that a company may not want to do the study because they could be working in a hostile environment. He noted that he has spoken to an attorney (from Winchester) that is willing to represent the Portland City Council.

Golden questioned the timing of option #1 and #2 as it pertains to the 2027 budget cycle. He noted that the study could increase public safety and potentially show a cost savings. He pleaded to the mayor and BOW to please reconsider contracting with Barry Ritter to do the study as this is the best fix. He noted that the cost of the study is \$13,200; which is approximately \$2 per city resident.

Mayor Westlake noted that he may be willing to rethink the option of doing the study, but would like to individually talk to council / BOW members. Hilfiker requested that this discussion take place in an executive meeting. McClung noted that it would need to be in a public setting, not an executive session.

May noted that the mayor is looking out for a few and that his responsibility is to look out for the city.

Goldsworthy questioned if equipment for dispatch has been ordered. It is believed that the equipment was ordered last week after the radio meeting with the county and Ritter Strategic. The cost at this time is not available, but believed to be around \$300,000 – equipment and maintenance agreement.

Wes noted that an Interlocal Agreement is being drafted for cost sharing of the radios and tower. He noted that the Jay County Commissioners will soon be coming to the council with a formal request.

May asked if any other cities/ towns in JC have their own dispatch? Hilfiker noted that Dunkirk previously had their own dispatch, but consolidated with the county several years back. She also noted that residents already pay for the 911 service through your cellular phone carrier.

#### **Discussion – Council Hiring Legal Representation**

Motion by May, seconded by McClung to add to the March 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda the discussion of council hiring legal representation. Council members are requested to bring a list of potential candidates to interview. Roll call vote. All present voted aye.

Discussion:

Council unanimously agreed that they are at the point that they need to have their own legal representation. McClung noted that a local attorney has already declined the offer and that a Winchester attorney has indicated that he would be interested in this position. May noted that he would like to talk to a few individuals to see if they would be interested in representing the council.

#### **2025 Annual Financial Report has been submitted – No action needed**

#### **Council Comments**

Ashley – Happy birthday to my daughter, Charlie! Noted that she is on student council.

Dave – Addressed the high school students and stated that democracy is a wonderful thing. That is may not always be pretty, but it is the best process that we have in the United States.

Matt – Appreciates each employee and their dedication to public service.

Ron –

1. Questioned if the Police Department has an active SWAT Team or Drug Investigator. He noted that the PD needs to update their website to reflect the correct information.
2. Asked how local law enforcement is working with ICE.
3. Noted the FB posts from the mayor are inappropriate.
4. Questioned why Mayor Westlake is getting his trash picked up when he isn't paying a water bill.

Kent – Thanked the Water Department for notifying customers when they have a high consumption of water. This is a great indicator that the resident may have a water leak.

#### Mayor's Report

Noted the upcoming Fiber Fest and Collectible Car Show.

#### Clerk Treasurer's Report

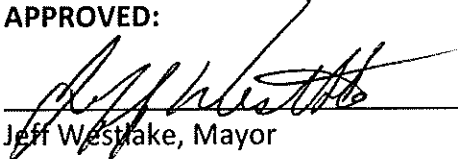
1. Suggested that the council take a look at the trash ordinance as it is currently not being followed. All items set out are being collected; including large items and furniture.
2. Noted that the mayor duties per IC 36-4-5-2 does not exempt a mayor from following the ordinances.
3. Noted that through collecting information for the trash rate study, a list of customers receiving trash collection, but not paying a water bill was generated. Next week the sanitation crew will be instructed to pick up those toters.
4. Noted the junk cars and cars without license plates or expired plates.
5. Questioned if the city still has a Code Enforcement Officer. The mayor noted that he (the code officer) is on the fence about quitting. Noted that the Police Department may be looking for a new Code Enforcement Officer.

Adjournment Motion by May, seconded by McClung to adjourn at 6:47 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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Lori Phillips, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED:

  
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Jeff Westlake, Mayor