

City of Creswell City Council Meeting

Council Members Present:

- Mayor Smith
- Councilor Costilla, Council President
- Councilor Holt
- Councilor Kent
- Councilor Kremer
- Councilor Morris
- Councilor Dukes

Audience: 9

Press: 0

Staff Present

- City Manager Vincent Martorello
- Finance Director Jim Piper
- Public Works Director Cliff Bellew
- Assistant to City Manager Angela Keppler
- City Recorder Caitlin Born
- Airport Manager Shelley Humble
- Sergeant Alex Speldrich

Opening of the Meeting

Mayor Smith thanked everyone for coming to the City Council Meeting on February 09, 2026, opening the meeting at 6:00 p.m. He asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Forum

Two speakers addressed the City Council during the public forum.

Bjorn Dahlen, editor-in-chief of Oregon Aviation News and a 30-year user of the Creswell Airport, raised concerns about what he characterized as a "severe crisis of authority and apparent financial cover-up" regarding airport litigation. Mr.Dahlen argued that under Section 6 of the Creswell City Charter, the City Council holds all substantive powers including policy and financial decisions to engage in civil litigation and questioned whether the City Manager had unilateral authority to wage

legal action against airport tenants. He specifically referenced an \$800,000 lawsuit with an airport tenant, stating that either the Council authorized the litigation during a secret executive session violating Oregon public meeting law, or the Council never voted at all, meaning the administration violated the charter by spending taxpayer money without authorization.

Dahlen presented evidence showing nearly \$30,000 in Montoya law payments over the last three months that were categorized under general fund materials and services, which he claimed was being used to hide litigation costs. He requested that the Mayor and City Council state for the record whether they authorized the current Meadowbrook Investments litigation in executive session or if the City Manager acted unilaterally and called for explicit transparency in transfers from the General Fund to the airport fund.

Debbie Yee, a Creswell resident, spoke about staffing and financial challenges facing the South Lane Fire District. She explained that the district typically operates with only two firefighters on duty at any given time who must cover both fire and EMT services, creating situations where emergency response is compromised when crews are already committed to calls. She described instances where only one person drove a fire truck to emergencies and spent 15 minutes alone at fires, and cited a recent total loss in Cottage Grove where only four firefighters responded instead of the ten or more typically needed.

Debbie acknowledged voting against the fire district levy in November 2024 but expressed concern that the district is now in a "spiral" of being unable to hire adequate staff or compete with other fire districts. She noted that the district will place the levy back on the ballot in May and encouraged residents to research the issue, stating that while she doesn't want to pay more taxes, she also doesn't want lives to be at risk due to inadequate emergency services.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Smith referenced letters from the governor and the Brownsville mayor regarding transparency. He also recognized the achievements of local sports teams, noting that the girls high school basketball team placed fifth in state, the boys high school team placed fourth, and the cheerleading team placed second at state competitions.

Correspondence

No Correspondence were in the packet..

Consent Calendar

Mayor Smith asked if all councilors had been able to review the minutes. He noted all items are considered routine and would be enacted unless pulled for correction. After confirming everyone had a chance to view the minutes, he entertained a motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Councilor Kent moved to accept the council meeting minutes as currently written. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dukes. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

February 2026 Administrative Report

Finance Expenditures Report

Finance Director Jim Piper fielded questions from the Council regarding various expenditures. Councilor Staci Holt inquired about several significant payments, including:

A \$50,000 payment to Rontech Technologies, which Finance Director James Piper explained was a progress payment for bathrooms being installed at Second Street Park (Robinett-Hughes Park). Councilor Holt noted this was part of a \$283,000 grant-funded project that requires the city to expend funds first and then receive reimbursement.

Councilor Holt asked about the Century West Engineering for \$61,442 City Manager Vincent Martorello. stated it was for the airport master plan

Councilor Holt asked about the Lane County Department of Finance received \$156,000, which Finance Director James Piper clarified was the quarterly payment for sheriff services, not court fines as initially discussed.

Councilor Holt asked about a \$53,000 payment to Trojan Technologies for water plant modules, which are replaceable components budgeted at \$55,000 for the fiscal year.

The city also refunded Taco Bell for sewer charges they had been incorrectly assessed, as they are connected to a private sewer system on the east side.

Lane County Sheriff's Report

Sergeant Alex Speldrich reported that calls for service remained within normal ranges. He highlighted that three out of four deputies recently completed 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team training focused on mental health and alternatives to incarceration, with the fourth deputy having previously completed the training. He noted that he served as one of the instructors for the program.

Sergeant Alex Speldrich reported praised his team's work, stating they are "solving cases that we thought would never be solved" and successfully recovering stolen items and holding people accountable for crimes.

Mayor Smith expressed his gratitude to the Sheriff's team for their efficient handling of a personal matter that occurred in his residence. He praised Deputy Dills and the deputies for their quick and efficient resolution, highlighting how they managed to figure out and handle the situation in just a couple of days. Mayor Smith acknowledged that the swift adjudication and resolution were particularly commendable. He further appreciated the deputies' overall performance and effectiveness, noting that the incident was resolved fairly, which reinforced his trust in their capabilities to maintain safety and order in the community.

Councilor Holt asked about a recent incident that made news on her street. Sergeant Speldrich reported confirmed that the person arrested in connection with that incident remains in jail and is facing trial for serious offenses.

Councilor Kremer inquired about two Measure 11 cases Sergeant Speldrich reported that one was unfounded and involved computer content, while the other was a domestic violence disclosure that is still being investigated by the detective division.

He announced plans to deploy a speed trailer near the bridge area once he identifies appropriate property and obtains necessary approvals from property owners.

City Attorney Report

City Manager Martorello reported that the city attorney accrued 13 hours in February. Councilor Staci Holt questioned several entries, particularly work on "options for the city to consider in adjusting conditional use standards" and preparation for a land use public hearing.

City Manager Martorello explained that these items related to the US Market application, which was a proposal for a gas station with drive-through located east of McDonald's. The Planning Commission denied the application, primarily due to concerns about the traffic impact analysis that wasn't supported by the Oregon Department of Transportation. The applicant chose to resubmit the application rather than appeal to the City Council, addressing the Planning Commission's concerns. Much of the attorney's work involved reviewing the legal mechanisms for resubmission and evaluating the Planning Commission's findings.

Code Enforcement Report

Code Enforcement Officer Pierre presented cases in the new spreadsheet format. Councilor Mark Kremer raised concerns about Case 443, where a vehicle was moved from the street to a driveway but now appears to obstruct the sidewalk, Code Enforcement Officer Pierre acknowledged that while the situation was improved, the vehicle positioning might still be problematic and agreed to revisit the property to work with the owner on better placement.

Councilor Holt asked about Case 424, which involves a nuisance affecting public health with significant accumulations of junk and trash. Code Enforcement Officer Pierre explained this was one of his first cases involving multiple neighbor complaints and represents a complex situation with both junk (defined as appliances, refrigerators, machine parts) and general trash. He recently met with the property owners to outline expectations and will revisit on March 23rd. If not corrected, the case could escalate to the city's derelict property process involving potential abatement.

Councilor Holt questioned whether the city proactively looks for code violations or relies primarily on complaints. City Manager Martorello explained that with one officer, enforcement is largely complaint-driven, though Pierre is empowered to act on violations he observes while conducting other duties. Pierre noted that citizen complaints carry more weight in enforcement actions and

encouraged residents to report issues, acknowledging that many people hesitate to file complaints due to fear of retaliation.

Building Report

No discussion occurred regarding the February building permit summary.

City Manager's Update

FEMA Flood Plain Update

City Manager Martorello reported that the city has updated its website with appeal information following concerns raised during previous public forums. The city reached out to Cottage Grove's floodplain administrator Leni Crow to discuss the appeal process and potential flood insurance impacts.

The city included a flyer with recent utility bills explaining the appeal process and advising residents that purchasing flood insurance before FEMA's remapping takes effect would allow them to be grandfathered in at cheaper rates. City Manager Martorello met with Leni Crow for an hour and a half and invited her to attend the April 27th work session to provide detailed information about the appeal process, elevation certificates, and flood insurance impacts.

The city can help residents obtain larger discounts on flood insurance through a point-based system where communities receive scores for various activities like education and outreach. Higher scores translate to greater discounts for community members, so planning staff is working with Leni Crow to maximize the city's point total.

Councilor Holt expressed concern about the specificity of discount information, questioning whether all insurance carriers would honor grandfathered rates or if this applied only to FEMA programs. City Manager Martorello acknowledged the need for clearer information and confirmed that Leni would provide firsthand details at the April 27th work session.

2nd Street Neighborhood Meeting Update

City Manager Martorello reported that approximately ten people attended the neighborhood meeting regarding upcoming construction. The meeting included a layout of the entire construction area, general updates, and individual consultations with neighbors to address specific questions. The city committed to posting and emailing the final construction schedule once available and encouraged residents to contact him with any questions before construction begins.

City Manager Martorello emphasized that this proactive approach was designed to prevent the communication problems experienced during previous projects, ensuring neighbors are well-informed before work begins. Mayor Smith noted that he saw documentation of the meeting including live streaming and photographs.

City Manager Martorello also announced that an executive session might be scheduled for the following Monday to discuss litigation matters, pending Council member availability.

Council Action Items

Resolution 2026-02 A Resolution Dissolving Resolution 2020-24 A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter Into A Property Swap with South Lane County Fire and Rescue

City Manager Martorello explained that during the January 26th work session, he discussed the previously proposed land swap with the fire district where the city would give up its community center in exchange for the current fire station location to create a parking lot. Since the original 2020 agreement, circumstances have changed significantly - the community center is now more heavily utilized, and the fire district no longer considers the downtown location as desirable as other potential sites in Creswell.

Following the work session, there was consensus to formally dissolve the previous resolution. The fire district has already passed their resolution dissolving their authorization. Since no actual agreement was ever executed between the parties, dissolving the authorizing resolution would formally close the matter.

Motion: Councilor Joan Morris moved that the City Council approve Resolution 2026-02, a resolution repealing Resolution 2020-24, a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a property swap with South Lane County Fire and Rescue. Councilor Clark Kent seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

With no further business Mayor Smith adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

*Signature on File

Nicholas Smith, Mayor

Attest:

*Signature on File

Caitlin Born, City Recorder