BURNS CITY COUNCIL
September 23, 2026

The Burns City Council met in regular session on September 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Members present were as follows:

Mayor:	Jen Hoke
Councilor President:	
Councilors:	Susan Lowe
	Shane Brockmann
	Bryan Garo
	Chase Patterson – Excused
	Andrew Roy
	Tod Gahley

Also, in attendance were City Manager Brenda Engebretson, Public Works Director Ty Richardson, Police Chief Robby Tiller, Fire Chief Scott Williamson, and City Clerk Tiffany Leffler.

SUMMARY

The Burns City Council meeting covered several key topics including public comments, department head reports, and URA (Urban Renewal Agency) training. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and establishment of a quorum, followed by public comments from residents including concerns about public records requests and URA operations. Department head reports were presented by Fire Chief Scott Williamson, with Williamson reporting 167 calls for service year-to-date including 49 EMS calls and training events totaling 962 hours. He also gave an update on airport maintenance, vegetation control, and upcoming equipment projects including a new 40x50 equipment building. The main portion of the meeting focused on URA training presented by Councilor Gahley, covering the agency's purpose, funding mechanisms, and current projects including Miller Springs Phase 1 with 30 new homes and a proposed boundary amendment adding 45 acres with 77 residential and 24 industrial lots to the URA. City Manager Brenda Engebretson provided updates on water project progress with Steel receiving EPA funding and 90% completion expected by end of October and reported on RIF grant submission and upcoming one-stop meeting for wastewater project. Public Works Director Ty Richardson reported critical failure of hydro excavation equipment requiring $300,000-$500,000 replacement. The meeting concluded with councilor comments including discussions of financial procedures and public records requests.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Rollins, 831 Riverside Drive, raised concerns about public records requests and council actions, promising to file formal complaints. He also voiced his issues with Nick Green and his company Catalyst providing the URA training materials.

Harney County Judge Bill Hart requested to discuss URA matters during the URA training portion of the meeting.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

Fire Chief Scott Williamson presented the fire department report, highlighting that Burns Fire Department has responded to 167 calls year-to-date, including 49 EMS calls, 13 structure fires, 49 motor

vehicle accidents, and 17 wildland fires. The department has conducted 41 training events totaling 962 hours of training, including state-certified classes, and has implemented a car removal program and new ladder truck equipment. He also discussed the High Debt Partnership Intern Program, which involves working with high school students on wildland fire prevention, though noted the program's limited potential for recruiting new volunteer firefighters due to participants' college plans.

Fire Chief Scott Williamson also provided an update on airport maintenance activities, including ongoing light replacements, wind indicator repairs, and fuel system checks. He reported significant progress on vegetation control with 70 hours of mowing completed this year and discussed two grants: one for replacing the field system and another for a snowplow truck that has been delivered for outfitting. The new equipment building construction is expected to begin soon pending a final permit for artifact monitoring, and a card system issue at the fuel pumps has been addressed with new signage and will be resolved with a new user-friendly system.

Fire Chief Scott Williamson also mentioned the next safety committee meeting was scheduled for the second Tuesday in October at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL AND ADDED ITEMS

Mayor Hoke postponed the Public Hearing on Development Code Amendments and Ordinance No. 26-909 from ordinance/resolutions until October 14, 2026, City Council meeting. Mayor Hoke then added Resolution No. 26- 830 regarding public rights of way vacation to ordinances and resolutions. The council was also informed of why the June 24th City Council Minutes were being amended, specifically clarifying CBDG grant language regarding water and sewer funding. They were informed that they had both versions in their packets and the change was highlighted on the newest version.

Councilor Garo made a motion to approve the agenda with the changes. Councilor Gahley seconded the motion. All Ayes. (6/0)

CONSENT AGENDA

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2026 –
Revised City Council Meeting Minutes - June 24, 2026 –

City Manager Brenda Engebretson clarified that the only change was to the CBDG grant language regarding water and sewer funding. She explained the breakdown of the amount was required in the minutes to move forward with the grant

Councilor Garo made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the amendment as presented to June 24, 2026, City Council minutes. Councilor Gahley seconded the motion. All Ayes. (6/0)

NEW BUSINESS

1. Safety Committee Discussion –

   City Manager Brenda Engebretson said the next Safety Committee meeting would be on the second Tuesday in October

2. URA Training (Training Packet Attached) -

Councilor Gahley expressed his want for getting another URA meeting scheduled and on the books. The council decided to schedule the next URA meeting for September 30, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Councilor Gahley then presented an overview of the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) in Burns, explaining its purpose, funding mechanisms, and current projects. Key points discussed included the proposed boundary amendment to add 45+ acres (77 residential and 24 industrial lots) to the URA, which would allow the city to transfer approximately $600,000 in debt to the URA at 0% interest.

The council also discussed the need for more regular URA board meetings and proper filing of required documents with the Secretary of State.

Harney County Judge Bill Hart shared that over the past 4 years and estimated 2026, approximately $385,000 has been distributed to the URA from various taxing districts. He discussed URA financial details, explaining that estimated amounts for a 26-year period total around $385,000, with approximately $127,000 not yet distributed. He noted that about 80-85% of lots in the B Street Extension Area Expansion are currently exempt properties, meaning limited revenue would be generated until these properties are sold.

Kim Rollins, 831 Riverside Drive, expressed concerns about the URA board's financial management and requested a suspension of new business except for contractual obligations of already approved projects, warning against potential debt issues similar to those experienced in John Day.

The next URA meeting will be on September 30, 2026.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES

1. Ordinance No. 26-909 – An Ordinance approving amendments to the City of Burns Development Code.

During Agenda approval and added items, Mayor Hoke postponed Ordinance No. 26-909 until October 14, 2026, City Council meeting.

2. Resolution No. 26-830 – A resolution of the City of Burns pertaining to the vacation of certain public right-of-way approved by the city through ordinance No. 26-908.

Councilor Garo made a motion to read Resolution No. 26-829 by title only. Councilor Gahley seconded the motion. All Ayes. (6/0)

Councilor Gahley made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-829. Councilor Garo seconded the motion. All Ayes. (6/0)

ADDITIONAL INFORAMTION

The council discussed the implementation of security cameras in the lobby, with Fire Chief Scott Williamson providing an update that cables have been run, and it's now a matter of setting up an account with the camera company.

City Manager Brenda Engebretson provided updates on several infrastructure projects and administrative matters. The water project received its first EPA payment on September 14th of $660,989.12, with work progressing on multiple streets and expected to reach 90% completion by end of October. She reported submitting grants for Regional Infrastructure Fund and Community Development Block Grant projects. She also announced a one-stop meeting scheduled for September 30th with funders and engineers to discuss the wastewater project. The audit process is ongoing, with 2023-24 audits not expected to be completed until after April 15th, 2027, while progress continues with more recent years' audits. She informed the council that they were also wrapping up Police Union negotiations and reminded them of the Council training on October 14 at 5:00 p.m., noting that it would be an hour and a half long.

Public works Director Ty Richardson reported that the city's hydro excavation truck is at a critical failure point and requires expensive repairs totaling $60,000-$80,000, with an additional $20,000 needed for tank repairs. The truck's water pump, chassis, and other components need replacement. They have continued to try and repair the equipment but at this point they are unable to keep it up, and the city will need to budget $300,000-$500,000 for a replacement truck. This truck is Public Works' most important piece of equipment, and the city could be in a bad place without it.

The Cemetery Committee reported on new member Shana Withee and discussed plans for planting evergreens and red maples at Jim Withee's grave, with the family requesting to set their own tombstone. The committee also noted that equipment worth approximately $4,000 was stolen from the cemetery last year and may require an insurance claim.

Councilor Gailey provided updates on R3 projects, including housing developments in Baker City and ongoing work in Miller Springs, including a new recreation area with trails planned for spring. He also announced that R3 received approximately $3 million in lottery funds that will arrive next spring, though there are stipulations about property ownership that need to be addressed.

The council further discussed financial procedures with Councilor Lowe making a motion made to add a discussion about taxpayer bills and dual-check signing requirements to the next council meeting agenda. Councilor Gahley seconded the motion. All Ayes (6/0)

Councilor Brockmann submitted a request for fire department response records, which led to a discussion about proper procedures for council information requests. It was noted that some of these things would be addressed in the training on October 14th.

NEXT STEPS

1. City: Schedule and hold the URA meeting on September 30th at 6:00 PM.

2. City Staff: Add the discussion of financials to the agenda for the next council meeting.

3. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Retrieve and provide the time for the "one-stop" wastewater project meeting scheduled for September 30th.

4. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Submit the final documents for the CDBG grant for the second phase of the water project.

5. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Continue to load financial documents for FY24, FY25, and FY26 audits.

6. City Council: Attend the City Council training on October 14th at 5:00 PM.

7. Public Works Director Ty Richardson: Research and find a replacement for the hydro excavation equipment, with a budget estimate of $300,000 to $500,000.

8. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Work on creating a monthly financial package for the council, including the AP run.

ADJOURN

Mayor Hoke adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Recording for September 23, 2026, City Council meeting:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/KSAs0gTVTeIRKhJQU-u1LvAxOBisYg3qpf60OoVNPOteAofUCVTqTQp9EvH002Mn.3833PmWUjjj4uqtf?startTime=1790211651000

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Tiffany Leffler, City Clerk

Bryan Garo, Council President