BURNS CITY COUNCIL
December 10, 2025

The Burns City Council met in regular session on December 10, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. Members present were as follows:

Mayor:	Brad Erbe
Councilor President:	Jen Hoke
Councilors:	Susan Lowe
	Heather Smith
	Chase Patterson
	Andrew Roy
	Tod Gahley

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rob Paramore, 337 North Roanoke in Hines, is a business owner and property owner in Burns and raised questions about the effectiveness of the dike and levee improvements in preventing future flooding, especially concerning water flowing from the Paiute Reservation. He also inquired about whether the city had any plans to clean out the Silvies area to improve water flow. The council acknowledged the concerns and agreed to look into the specific issues raised, particularly regarding the flooding from Foley Drive and the Silvies area. They reassured him that they have been working on preventing this from happening again and will continue to do so.

Roy Schwenke, 580 East Adams, raised concerns about the towing of a trailer that had been sitting in the road for several months, questioning the criteria for determining it as a hazard. He also inquired about the ordinance that allows the city to collect impound fees. Mayor Erbe said he believed it was the city's fee schedule but let him know the council would look into his concerns.

SUMMARY

The City Council meeting addressed various community concerns, including flooding issues in Burns and property access disputes, while also reviewing chamber updates and infrastructure projects. The council discussed ongoing development plans, including the Miller Springs project and airport improvements, while also addressing traffic safety concerns and street naming processes. The conversation ended with discussions about waterway management and the need to strengthen regulations regarding vehicle storage in rights-of-way.

AGENDA APPROVAL AND ADDED ITEMS

Mayor Erbe Removed #2, Harney County Chamber Board Member Election Approval from New Business to the City Manager Report and Miller Springs Amendment to #2 in New Business.

Councilor Gahley made a motion to approve the agenda with the removed and added items. Councilor Hoke seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(7/0)**

CONSENT AGENDA

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – November 12, 2025 –

Councilor Hoke informed City Clerk Tiffany Leffler of corrections that needed to be made to the November 12, 2025, minutes. One mentioning Mayor Erbe at the adjournment and he was not present and that other was that County Commissioner Patty Dorroh's last name was spelled incorrectly under the additional information section.

Councilor Gahley made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilor Roy seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(7/0)**

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Harney County Chamber Update** – Jessica Hedges, Harney County Chamber Director, presented their 2025 update, highlighting growth in membership and new initiatives like Kids Bike Repair Day. She outlined plans for 2026, including revamping the visitor center, expanding bike-related events, and seeking alignment with the city on transient lodging tax funds. The council expressed appreciation for Jessica's work and discussed the Burns Pond project, which aims to improve accessibility and wildlife habitat on ODF&W-owned land.

   Councilor Gahley discussed the Chamber's budget challenges, noting a $60,000 decrease over the past 3-4 years despite unchanged expectations. It was proposed to have a work session to establish clear expectations and funding arrangements with the city. The council agreed to schedule it for a third Wednesday of the month but would let Tiffany and Jessica work the details out. The need was emphasized for a written agreement to ensure consistency regardless of leadership changes and highlighted the Chamber's efforts to generate revenue through new initiatives like merchandise and the Harney brand.

2. **Miller Springs Amendment** – City Manager Brenda Engebretson informed the council that this amendment was an extension for the Miller Springs water, sewer, and stormwater site improvements project, which would extend the completion date to June 30, 2027.

   Councilor Smith made a motion to approve the Miller Springs extension and to have the mayor sign the amendment. Councilor Hoke seconded the motion. All Ayes **(7/0)**

3. **Property Entrance Discrepancy - Nick Planinz** – He had come to discuss a property access issue where he felt a drainage ditch installed by the High Desert Veterans Village had significantly reduced the width of the entrance to his property. He informed council that that the city had required flood water to be contained on his property, similar to how Dollar General had to contain water on their property, and by them not doing this, it had reduced the entrance to his property from 40 feet to 20 feet. He expressed frustration that his concerns had not been addressed despite his attempts to obtain city records and that he was being required to pay for the records in question.

   It was determined the drainage ditch was on city right-of-way property, and that the area in question was not officially designated as a road but rather as plated land. The city has the right to use the 60-foot right-of-way for storm infrastructure, as it is conveying water through the area. The council informed Mr. Planinz that if he decided to develop his property in the future they would reassess any changes that may need to be made then. The discussion also touched on the cost and responsibility of making future improvements, such as installing a culvert for access and not being sure who would then be responsible for those costs at that time.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES

There were no Ordinances or Resolutions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A member of the public had some concerns about the Miller Springs Development's Infrastructure. There were concerns about its impact on the local water and sewer system, particularly in light of recent flooding. Councilor Smith emphasized that the development is privately owned but receives public funding and grant support for infrastructure. She clarified that the project is phased, with a goal of 120 homes in the first phase and a total of 300 homes over 20 years, which is intended to accommodate hospital employees and residents who have outgrown their current homes. There were also concerns about job availability for potential residents, with Councilor Hoke noting that the hospital has jobs that could support the income levels required for the new homes.

The meeting also covered several key updates and discussions. City Manager Brenda Engebretson reported on the Division 512 rulemaking process, emphasizing that cities are exempt and highlighting collaborative efforts with the County, Tribe, Hines, and Burns. She also provided updates on the water project, scheduled to go out to bid on December 18th, and the CCTV sewer system construction starting in late January. The committee reports included Chief Williamson's update on the Safety Committee's preparations for winter and the Christmas parade route, and City Clerk Tiffany Leffler's report on the Cemetery Committee's discussion of new trees, a bid awarded to Harney Lawn and Irrigation for cemetery sprinklers, and potential memorial trees for beautification.

Fire Chief Scott Williamson discussed several key updates for the airport, including the need to replace aging runway lights and a failing septic system. He reported that the airport's fuel sales have been profitable, with over $40,000 in net profit since June, with Councilor Smith noting that lower fuel prices have attracted more air traffic. The Council was also informed that a new snowplow was being finalized and that a new fee schedule and rules for the airport will be presented to council members in January for approval.

Councilor Smith discussed R3's projects progress, including the installation of roads, plumbing, and fire hydrants, with her highlighting her excitement of seeing vertical structures and development signs. She mentioned that over 500 homes are in development across the state, contributing to the governor's housing goals, though funding remains uncertain due to legislative dynamics. There were also questions raised about street naming processes, prompting a discussion on how street names are approved.

Councilor Roy shared concerns about public safety at a busy intersection, suggesting the need for stop signs and better visibility. The council also discussed several traffic and safety concerns, including confusion about right-of-way rules at intersections and the need to address faded or non-reflective traffic signs. There was some question about the status of crosswalks on Main Street, learning that while all intersections are considered crosswalks, drivers should exercise caution when crossing at unmarked locations. The council also addressed the issue of storing wrecked vehicles in right-of-way, with Police Chief Robby Tiller noting that him and City Manager Brenda Engebretson would look into existing ordinances and consult attorneys to strengthen regulations.

NEXT STEPS

1. City Clerk Tiffany Leffler and Chamber Director Jessica Hedges: Schedule and coordinate a work session (targeting January) to discuss the Chamber of Commerce transient lodging tax (TLT) agreement/expectations and clarify funding/roles; notify council of date.
2. Public Works Director Ty Richardson/City Staff: Continue coordination with Tribe and County regarding flood mitigation efforts; report updates at next Waterways Committee meeting (Dec 15, 2025, at 10:00 am).
3. City Staff: Research and clarify city ordinances/statutes regarding wrecked vehicles in rights-of-way or driveways, including restrictions and enforcement; report back to council.
4. City Staff: Review and potentially update/replace faded or non-reflective street signs; assess liability and budget/grant options for replacement.
5. City Staff: Review legal guidelines and process for approval of new street names in developments; clarify if city approval is required and report back to council.
6. Chief Williamson: Provide new airport fee schedule and rules/regulations to Tiffany for distribution to council; schedule vote for January 28th meeting.
7. City Staff: Continue to monitor and address the airport septic system issue, including exploring options for new tank or connection to BLM system, and seek funding as needed.
8. City Clerk Tiffany Leffler: Schedule and hold URA meeting on January 28 at 5:15pm to review new application.
9. City Staff: Continue to monitor and report on CCTV inspection of sewer mains (starting end of January) and prepare for subsequent discussion of needed repairs and rate study (expected in 2-3 months).
11. City Staff: Proceed with putting the water project out to bid by December 18th.
12. City Staff: Continue collaborative meetings with County, Hines, and Tribe on Division 512 rulemaking and water issues; report updates to council.

ADJOURN

Mayor Erbe adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Tiffany Leffler, City Clerk

Brad Erbe, Mayor