BURNS CITY COUNCIL
November 12, 2025

The Burns City Council met in regular session on November 12, 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, Officer Emerson Budreau, and City Clerk Tiffany Leffler. Present via Zoom were Jesse Christensen, John Galt and Robert Almanza with HECO Engineering.

SUMMARY

The Burns City Council meeting began with administrative matters including agenda approval and the swearing in of the new Police Chief Robby Tiller, followed by a detailed discussion of a 424-page wastewater facilities plan that will undergo DEQ review. There were concerns addressed about council engagement and communication platforms, while also discussing reviewing various city ordinances including parking regulations and code enforcement. The conversation ended with updates on housing developments, infrastructure projects, and URA financial implications, along with discussions about stormwater fees and flood control measures.

AGENDA APPROVAL AND ADDED ITEMS

Mayor Erbe Removed the Harney Art Show and Sale from New Business and added the Wastewater facility Plan to #1 on New Business.

Councilor Roy made a motion to approve the agenda with the removed and added items. Councilor Hoke seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(6/0)**

CONSENT AGENDA

Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – October 22, 2025 –

Councilor Gahley made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilor Roy seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(6/0)**

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Wastewater Facility Plan** – The council received a draft of the Wastewater Facilities Plan, which is 424 pages long. Jesse Christensen with HECO requested that they review the first 86 pages before the next council meeting in December where they can bring any concerns they have. He explained that HECO plans to submit the report to DEQ for review, which could take up to two months, after which they will ask the council to adopt the plan in January.

Robert Almanze with HECO emphasized the importance of reviewing the costs and recommendations in the report.

Jesse Christensen also mentioned that the timeline for infrastructure improvements and financing options was included in the document.

2. **Council Discussion** – Councilor Smith expressed concerns about the low attendance and engagement from the council at recent council meetings including the recent URA Work Session, emphasizing the importance of representing the community effectively. Councilor Smith also discussed the use of Burns Live, a communication platform, and encouraged councilors to use it to share updates and engage with the community. She informed them that Burns Live is a public app with opt-in notifications and explained that councilors have access to a separate app to generate content same as the staff does. She urged them to all participate in that as well as the meetings.

   Mayor Brad Erbe expressed concern about having too many voices on the platform and emphasized that the intent is to provide clear and important information to the community.

3. **Code Enforcement Update** – After speaking with Officer Emerson Budreau, the council agreed to schedule a Work Session to review and potentially revise various city ordinances, including parking regulations and animal control laws. They also touched on code enforcement issues and the need to address derelict properties.

   Officer Emerson Budreau mentioned plans to work with Chief Tiller on the abatement processes.

   The council revisited the concerns about the city's parking and code enforcement ordinances, particularly regarding right-of-way and setback definitions. They were encouraged to email their specific concerns to Police Chief Robby Tiller and Officer Emerson Budreau, who will work with City Manager Brenda Engebretson and City Clerk Tiffany Leffler to review the issues and potentially recommend changes to the council. They also discussed the ongoing debates about permit requirements for commercial vehicles and practicality of a 3-day window for abandoned vehicle removal, with questions raised about whether certain state requirements need to be maintained.

4. **Murals and Ordinances** – John Clemens, a rancher, expressed concerns about the painting and murals on downtown buildings, particularly the potential desecration of historical stonework. He argued the need to protect the town's heritage and historical significance, suggesting that measures be put in place to regulate what can be painted on buildings. The council acknowledged the importance of balancing freedom of expression with preserving historical sites and discussed the possibility of establishing a historical district to address these concerns. They also discussed concerns about political and sexual orientation murals, with some members expressing constitutional and legal uncertainties about restricting such expressions. They agreed to explore legal options and consider holding a workshop to examine potential ordinances, with City Manager Brenda Engebretson tasked to consult legal counsel about the city's authority in Oregon.

5. **Questions to Council** – Patty Hodge raised questions about proposed housing developments, expressing concerns about water and sewer capacity. She requested answers about commercial properties and potential residents for these homes, which she agreed to submit in writing for the next meeting.

   The council addressed her questions about city finances and infrastructure, explaining that they do not yet have an answer regarding whether the estimated $5.30 monthly charge for a loan will

continue after the grant pays it off in 2027, as this decision has not been discussed publicly. They clarified that while the city received a $3 million grant for a new housing development, this funding was specific to that project and could not be used for other infrastructure needs like road repairs. The council encouraged residents to direct specific questions to staff members, when possible, rather than saving them for public meetings.

The council also spoke to the housing development plans for Miller Springs, where the developer will build homes based on demand rather than an immediate large-scale construction, with a 20-year plan for all these homes. They clarified that Oregon's housing shortage means cities cannot automatically reject housing developments, nor do they want to, and developers must be given due process unless the city can prove the system cannot accommodate the development.

6. **Frosty Fest Light Parade** – City Clerk Tiffany Leffler informed the council that the Harney County Chamber would be handling the Christmas parade and lighting contest but were unable to make it to the meeting that evening. She informed them that she was waiting for an update about the ODOT permit as well as insurance verification and she would contact them to find out where things were at with those.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES

There were no Ordinances or Resolutions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The meeting covered updates on several community initiatives and events. City Manager Brenda Engebretson shared insights from County Commissioner Patty Dorroh's Work Sessions on economic development, highlighting discussions on housing projects and the need for employment opportunities.

Chief Williamson with the Airport Committee, reported on maintenance activities, grant applications, and an upcoming Aviation Day event. He also touched on the need to investigate and potentially repair a septic tank issue at the airport.

The meeting also covered several key topics, including the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and its financial implications. At the last URA meeting Nick Green with Catalyst presented examples of how URA development could significantly increase tax revenue, with one parcel going from $361 annually to $47,000 split between six districts. The group discussed how URA funds could be reinvested in the community, such as new schools or parks, and clarified that the board does not have to wait 30 years to distribute funds.

Additionally, Public Works Director Ty Richardson provided updates on flood control measures, including new fencing, surveys, and culvert replacements. The conversation ended with discussions about stormwater fees and housing developments.

NEXT STEPS

1. Council: Need to review the wastewater facilities plan before the December 10th meeting
2. Jesse/HECO: Send wastewater facilities plan to DEQ for review now but implement any changes from council feedback and update the report for DEQ

4. Council: Adopt the wastewater facility plan in January
5. Council: Email Officer Emerson Budreau with concerns about parking ordinances as well as other ordinances
6. Officer Emerson Budreau and Chief Tiller: Review Council concerns about ordinances and present recommendations back to Council
7. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Contact legal counsel to determine what authority the city has regarding murals and historical preservation
8. City Staff: Follow up with Frosty Fest organizers regarding ODOT application and insurance
9. City Clerk Tiffany Leffler: Send URA meeting video to all Council members
10. Councilor Hoke: Reach out to Suzanne Settle and Bill Hart to schedule Waterways Committee meeting for first or second week of January

ADJOURN

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

Tiffany Leffler, City Clerk

Brad Erbe, Mayor