

**Burns City Council
Work Session Meeting**

June 22, 2026

The Burns City Council held a Work Session on June 22, 2026, at 6:01 p.m. The members present were as follows:

Mayor: Jen Hoke
Councilors: Susan Lowe – Excused
Shane Brockmann
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.

Mayor Hoke called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Approval

Councilor Gahley made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilor Patterson seconded the motion. All Ayes. (5/0)

Summary

The City of Burns Council held a work session to discuss the establishment of a stormwater utility fee. Public Works Director Ty Richardson presented the need for dedicated funding to manage stormwater infrastructure, maintenance, and flood prevention, explaining that current funding comes from other departments like water and sewer. Multiple residents expressed concerns about the proposed fee, including Kim Rollins (831 Riverside Drive) who questioned the lack of specific plans and costs, and Pat Brewster (662 Riverside Drive) who noted the burden on fixed-income residents. Council members discussed potential fee amounts, with Councilor Patterson suggesting \$1-\$2 for residential, while Councilor Roy suggesting maybe higher amounts for businesses. Councilor Brockmann proposed a percentage-based fee tied to water and sewer bills. The discussion revealed ongoing challenges with infrastructure maintenance, grant applications, and the need for engineering studies to address specific issues like levee improvements and drainage systems.

Items of Discussion

1. Ordinance No. 26-909 – An Ordinance of the City of Burns amending Chapter 13 of the Burns Municipal Code to establish a Stormwater Utility and Stormwater Service Charge and imposing an initial monthly Stormwater Charge per utility account.

The city led a work session on establishing a stormwater utility fee for the City of Burns, with Public Works Director Ty Richardson presenting the key considerations and benefits of implementing such a system. Ty explained that stormwater utilities provide dedicated funding for management programs, infrastructure maintenance, and flood prevention. The discussion covered various stormwater infrastructure components and ongoing projects, including the Dyke D Levee, drainage evaluations for multiple streets, and maintenance needs across the city's drainage systems.

Ty presented information about municipal code requirements for new developments.

Several residents, including Craig Grasty (671 East Jackson) and Kim Rollins (831 Riverside Drive), expressed concerns about the lack of a specific proposed fee amount and questioned whether the project should be funded through grants or bonds rather than immediate fees. Whitney Garo (280 West C Street) suggested creating an emergency fund with council oversight and proposed limits on fee increases, while Doug Furr (17 Fairview Heights Loop) raised questions about potential duplicate charges for both residential and business properties.

The council indicated they wanted input from the public before determining the specific fee amount.

Pat Brewster (662 Riverside Drive) expressed concerns about the financial impact on retired residents on fixed incomes, suggesting the city pursue grant funding instead. Bryan Garo (280 West C Street) supported adding a small monthly fee for overtime for public works staff but emphasized the need for well-crafted resolutions to protect future generations. Jared Presley proposed creating an emergency fund rather than a dedicated stormwater utility fund to provide more flexibility for public work's needs. Rick Paul (1523 Hillcrest Drive) criticized the timing of the proposal, citing recent voter rejections of tax increases and current economic challenges facing residents.

Shanna Campbell (793 N. Alder) inquired about a city grant writer that she had seen written on the budget and wondered if they could possibly help. Samantha Moores (1367 Foley Drive) raised concerns about an incomplete levee behind her property and issues with storm drains not functioning properly during recent rainstorms.

While the council discussed stormwater rate fees, one council member suggested a cap of maybe \$3-5. They also acknowledged community concerns about trust and communication following recent city turnover, as well as the challenges of infrastructure projects, highlighting the complexity of navigating regulations and the reliance on grant funding, which has contributed to a larger budget. They expressed a desire for collaboration between the city, tribe, and county, mentioning a potential reservoir project near Five Mile Dam.

The council shared their position on fees, advocating for a gradual approach to addressing infrastructure issues without overly burdening the public, suggesting a \$1 or \$2 monthly fee over several years to build a fund for repairs. Councilor Patterson emphasized the importance of transparency and public trust in how funds are used, suggesting an action plan influenced by public input focused on maintenance and emergency repairs rather than new infrastructure.

Councilor Roy advocated for a rate of 80 cents to \$1 for residential properties based on square footage and water displacement, while suggesting higher fees for businesses due to their ability to generate revenue.

The council emphasized the need to balance impacts on both residents and businesses, proposing a sliding scale approach with annual fee caps to prevent runaway costs. They discussed the feasibility of separating fees for businesses versus residential properties, acknowledging uncertainty about the current system's capabilities but committing to investigating further. The discussion addressed concerns about funding stormwater cleanup projects, with City noting that the Public Works Department lacks budget flexibility since water and sewer funds are already allocated.

The community inquired about grant opportunities for stormwater management projects, particularly regarding the problematic levee system that needs engineering solutions, and the council mentioned that the county has engaged an engineer for this purpose.

The meeting also discussed waterway studies and drainage issues related to Telos Development after the community had concerns about where it was located. It was clarified that developers, including Miller Springs and Telos, are responsible for paying for infrastructure improvements, including storm drainage systems.

The council proposed creating a specific list of infrastructure issues to fix with associated cost estimates, emphasizing that, if possible, grants should be the primary funding source. The group agreed to consider charging residential properties around \$1 to \$2 per unit while considering \$3-4 per water meter for commercial properties.

Suzanne Crowley-Thomas inquired about an engineering study regarding stormwater issues.

The City Council discussed a \$3 million county grant for engineering research on the Silvies and levee systems, with results expected to outline necessary improvements. Scott Williamson, the Fire Chief, explained that the current stormwater system was designed for drainage runoff but cannot handle river flood waters, and clarified that the Broadway area is a ditch bank rather than a levee. The discussion highlighted the need for a comprehensive 5-10-year plan, including a LIDAR study currently available through the building department, to secure grant funding for improvements.

While the council discussed implementing a stormwater management fee system, it was suggested that they may need a planning document and engineering analysis before determining costs and priorities. The group explored options for fee structure, with Kim Rollins (831 Riverside Drive) proposing a percentage-based fee (1.5% of water and sewer bills) that would be locked in rather than a fixed dollar amount. It was also emphasized that even grant funding requires initial engineering costs of approximately \$20,000-\$30,000 and explained that having a dedicated fund could help secure matching grants and cover engineering expenses before larger infrastructure projects are approved.

Next Steps

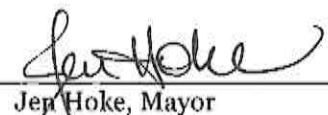
1. Public Works Director Ty Richardson: Work with city staff to eventually develop a specific, prioritized plan and cost estimates for stormwater maintenance and infrastructure projects, including lists of what needs to be fixed and in what order.
2. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Investigate the feasibility of separating stormwater utility fees by residential and commercial users (e.g., by meter size or usage) and report on the capability of the current billing system to support tiered or variable rates.
3. City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Draft or revise the proposed stormwater utility ordinance to include: a) clear, capped rates; b) specific language limiting future rate increases (e.g., maximum percentage increases and frequency); c) requirements for public input before rate changes; and d) designation of funds for both emergency and routine maintenance, with council oversight on major expenditures.
4. Public Works Director Ty Richardson and City Manager Brenda Engebretson: Coordinate with the Waterways Committee and the county to review the ongoing engineering study and integrate its recommendations into the city's stormwater management planning.
5. City Staff: Provide periodic updates to Council and the public on grant applications, engineering study progress, and the development of the stormwater management plan.

There was no further discussion.

ADJOURN

Mayor Hoke moved to adjourn at 7:31 p.m.


Tiffany Leffler, City Clerk


Jen Hoke, Mayor