**BURNS CITY COUNCIL**
**January 14, 2026**

The Burns City Council met in regular session on January 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Members present were as follows:

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

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

## SUMMARY

The City Council meeting covered a range of topics including project overages, chamber updates, and mural regulations. The council discussed financial concerns regarding an industrial and economic zone project, reviewed chamber activities and events, and explored regulations for murals and historic preservation. They also addressed water management collaboration, landlord responsibilities, and upcoming staffing changes, including the process for filling a vacant council seat after hearing of Councilor Smith's resignation. The council conveyed their appreciation for all the time, energy, and enthusiasm Councilor Smith brought to the table, as well as her passion for this community.

## AGENDA APPROVAL AND ADDED ITEMS

Mayor Erbe informed the council and public that Ordinance No. 908 would just be a discussion and there would be no action taken that evening. He also added approval to have the mayor sign the resolution between Burns, Hines, the county, and the Paiute Tribe to New Business.

Councilor Hoke made a motion to approve the agenda with the changes and added item. Councilor Gahley seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(6/0)**

## CONSENT AGENDA

**Regular City Council Meeting Minutes – December 10, 2025 –**

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

## NEW BUSINESS

1. Business Oregon Loan Application for Industrial and Economic Zone (I/E Zone) Public Improvements Project – Nick Green was unable to attend the meeting. The council discussed a significant overage of $736,682 on an Industrial and Economic Zone public improvements project, which was apparently signed in May and August without prior council approval. Council members expressed concerns about why the original bid was much lower than others and why the overage wasn't brought to their attention earlier. The city is bound by the agreements signed, and

the council agreed to pursue a loan from Biz Oregon to cover the overage, with an interest rate of approximately $55,000 annually over 20 years. The council requested further investigation into why the overage wasn't disclosed earlier and what representations were made during previous council meetings. They could not understand how the city would agree to something like that, especially with no limits.

Councilor Gahley mentioned something that was said in the contract, because there is a difference in what he could see in the contract. It talked about additions, which meant they wanted to do something different than they really did. He felt these were complications in the contract, which he didn't think was the same thing and that it needed to be discussed.

2. Harney County Chamber update – Jessica Hedges, Director of the Harney County Chamber of Commerce shared updates on their rebranding efforts and a new partnership with High Desert Partnership for branded merchandise. She discussed the success of the recent Harney County Christmas Jamboree and mentioned an upcoming after-action meeting to improve safety and overall experience. Jessica also inquired about the continuation of the Chamber's Platinum membership and invited the city staff to the 76th Annual Chamber Awards Banquet on February 7th that will be held at Sage Creek, featuring brisket by Pat Holliger and sides by Valley Golf Course, with a no-host bar. The Chamber graciously offered the city 4 tickets to that event. She also reported that the Chamber gained 45 new members last year and that she has scheduled quarterly meetings with City Clerk Tiffany Leffler for the entire year.

3. Donation Request for Hilander Booster Club – Diane Ross came to speak with the council about a donation request from the Burns Highlander Booster Club for their annual crab feed fundraiser held at the Elks on January 30th at 5:30 p.m. The council approved a $250 donation, matching last year's contribution.

   Councilor Patterson made a motion to donate $250, as they had done the previous year, to the Hilander Booster Club's annual crab feed fundraiser. Councilor Roy seconded the motion. All Ayes. **(6/0)**

4. Joint Resolution Between, Burns, Hines, Harney County, and the Paiute Tribe – City Manager Brenda Engebretson has been representing Burns and meeting with the Paiute Tribe, the county, and Hines about a joint resolution. It's a joint resolution of Burns Paiute Tribe, Harney County, the City of Burns, and the City of Hines for collaborative water management and co-stewardship in the Harney Basin. This has been driven by Water 512, and they will work with a specialist who is an attorney, and they are also working with High Desert Partnership. There is also an organization where they come in and help problem-solve issues and things like that, and that is an option that they are pursuing as well. She thought it was a good avenue to be good partners with the community members as well as with other agencies and work collaboratively towards something that is going to be a problem for the Harney Basin. She informed the council that she just needed permission to have Mayor Erbe sign it.

   Mayor Erbe wanted to let the council know that they had already approved of the resolution itself, and this was just to give him permission to sign it.

   Councilor Hoke made a motion to give permission for the mayor to sign this joint resolution as written.

## OLD BUSINESS

1. Murals and Ordinances – The council discussed mural regulations and historic preservation, with John Clemens sharing insights from Hood River's successful permitting process for building murals. The council agreed to schedule a work session to discuss mural regulations, with a focus on historic preservation rather than political messaging. They decided that a majority vote would be needed to establish the work session. They also discussed the need to develop their own proposal rather than simply adopting Hood River's ordinance, though John Clemens offered to share Hood River's ordinance for reference at the next meeting. The council agreed to review the ordinance from Hood River before their next work session, with the possibility of consulting the city's attorney if needed. The discussion also touched on mural regulations, with council members expressing interest in focusing on historical murals rather than erasing existing ones. They wanted to clarify that the goal is not to ban all murals but to set guidelines for future ones, particularly those visible from the highway. The work session was scheduled for next Wednesday, January 21st, from 6 to 8 PM.

## RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES

Ordinance 26.908 – An Ordinance of the City of Burns amending Chapter 13 of the Burns Municipal Code concerning sewer and water service rates and charges.

The council discussed an ordinance regarding landlord responsibility for unpaid water and sewer bills left by former tenants, with plans to make necessary corrections and bring it back for a vote at the next meeting. The council emphasized the importance of proper communication about the ordinance to affected property owners and landlords.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The group also addressed recent resignations, with Councilor Smith leaving the City Council and Emerson Budreau departing as Code Enforcement Officer. They expressed the need to fill the empty council seat as well as maintain enforcement of code violations still. The council plans to recruit a new council member and will reassess the role of code enforcement in light of upcoming police department negotiations. The council also acknowledged the need to schedule another meeting to discuss waterways issues.

The council discussed the process for filling a vacant council seat, agreeing to open applications for 30 days starting after the next meeting on February 2nd. Prospective candidates will be asked to submit letters by February 25th and present themselves at that meeting, with a final decision to be made at the March 11th meeting.

The meeting covered updates on airport operations and maintenance. Chief Williamson reported on ongoing projects, including a new fee schedule for airplane tie-downs and a courtesy car, which offers reduced rates for local pilots. He also discussed snow removal equipment funded by a grant and plans for a new equipment storage building. The airport committee is considering electronic gates with codes to enhance security. Field sales data for April to December were shared, showing a total of 28,273 gallons of fuel sold with a net profit of $47,927. The council expressed appreciation for the department heads and their efforts, particularly Chief Williamson's ability to secure grants and funding.

## NEXT STEPS

1. Brenda (City Manager): Schedule and coordinate the upcoming work session for next week (21st), ensuring the TLT (Transient Lodging Tax) discussion materials, including current TLT monies, usage, and related information, are emailed out in advance to council members.
2. John Clemens: Forward the Hood River mural ordinance and related information to council members and city staff for review prior to the upcoming work session.
3. City Attorney: Review and update the proposed water/sewer ordinance to ensure it references both water and sewer and bring the revised version back to the next council meeting for a vote.
4. City Staff: Communicate the proposed water/sewer ordinance changes to landlords and the public, allowing time for public input before the final vote.
5. City Staff: Ensure the new airport fee schedule and rules/regulations are included in council packets for the next meeting.
6. City Staff: Begin recruitment process to fill the vacant city council seat, including posting the opening for 30 days, collecting letters of intent, and scheduling appearances by candidates at the February 25th and March 11th meetings.
7. City Staff: Share letters of intent from council seat applicants with council members as they are received.
8. Brenda (City Manager)/City Staff: Review the needs of the police department and code enforcement responsibilities and consider how to structure these roles during upcoming labor negotiations.
9. Public Works Director Ty Richardson: Follow up with the judge directly regarding waterways issues, as referenced by Councilor Hoke.
10. Chief Williamson: Work on grant application for new equipment storage building at the airport and continue processing the snowplow grant.
11. City Staff/Chief Tiller: Continue code enforcement activities, including addressing properties identified by Councilor Lowe and others, and ensure this function is maintained despite staff changes.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Erbe adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Tiffany Leffler, City Clerk

Brad Erbe, Mayor