

# LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

## March 25, 2025

Mayor Carl Florea called the March 25, 2025 Study Session to order at 5:33 PM.

Council Present: Mayor Carl Florea, Sharon Waters, Clint Strand, Anne Hessburg, Zeke Reister and Shane Thayer.

Council Absent: Travis McMaster and Mike Bedard.

Staff Present: Matthew "Selby," Chantell Steiner, Maggie Boles, Andi Zontek-Backstrum and Andrea Fischer.

### 1. Public Works Department 2024 Annual Report Presentation

Public Works Director Andi Zontek-Backstrum presented the 2024 Public Works Annual Report. She explained that this year's report focused on what it feels like to be in Public Works, how it looks, and how it's perceived by the team. She shared an organizational chart showing the five divisions of Public Works: utilities, parks, facilities, wastewater, and water, along with the administrative functions.

Director Zontek-Backstrum presented a staffing timeline to illustrate the changes and challenges faced in 2024, including staff turnover and seasonal position vacancies. She then outlined the department's 2024 strategic plan, which included four goals: extract institutional knowledge and impact, work data, manage workplace culture, shift from a reactive culture to a proactive culture and strengthen internal and external relationships.

For 2025, she explained that the strategic plan had been condensed into three main goals: extract institutional knowledge and network data, enhance workplace culture, and complete policy and process improvements. She provided details on the objectives under each goal, including implementing asset management systems, standardizing materials and equipment, consolidating data, and advancing standard operating procedures.

She also shared results from an employee engagement survey, which covered topics such as workload management, job satisfaction, and feelings of appreciation and support within the department and the organization. The survey results indicated generally positive responses, with most categories scoring 75% or above.

The presentation concluded with highlights of major projects completed in 2024, including the Osborn playground, Glacier parking lot improvements, scrub seal, street maintenance and phase 3 of wastewater collection system improvements: cured in place pipe and she shared some department metrics for 2024.

Councilmembers asked questions about cybersecurity concerns, tech training opportunities, and the department's safety record. Chantell Steiner, Finance Director, provided information on workplace injuries and insurance claims, noting that

Leavenworth's claims were lower than most cities due to not having police and fire departments.

## **2. Housing Advisory Committee Potential Project Presentation**

Kurt Peterson gave a presentation on behalf of the Housing Advisory Committee. He explained that the committee is tasked with investing \$200,000 per year of allocated towards affordable housing, which has accrued to \$400,000 for 2025. The committee's focus includes identifying options for funding land purchases, reviewing proposed projects, and exploring infrastructure improvements.

Peterson outlined the committee's activities in 2024, which primarily involved educating themselves on housing issues by speaking with various stakeholders, including developers, builders, local charities, bankers, and investors. For 2025, the committee plans to shift focus to more action-oriented goals, including:

1. Developing a formal "request for ideas" process to gather community input on affordable housing projects.
2. Identifying existing city-owned properties that could be used for housing investments.
3. Increasing community and political connections to advocate for affordable housing.
4. Planning a Leavenworth-specific housing summit or workshop.

Peterson then presented two potential projects:

1. A cottage housing development in partnership with Tom Lin and Matt Melton, which would focus on providing housing for business employees, school district employees, and healthcare workers.
2. Development of city-owned land on Rattlesnake Hill, potentially working with organizations to keep the housing perpetually affordable.

Councilmembers discussed the presentation and asked questions.

## **3. Annexation of Pfleeger Property – Discussion**

Community Development Director Maggie Boles presented an annexation request for a half-acre property located at the end of West Benton near Mill and Mine Streets. The property owner is seeking to develop the land with a single-family home or potentially a duplex and requires city sewer service due to the lot size and presence of a wetland buffer.

She shared maps of the property and explained that the annexation is necessary for the owner to obtain water and sewer services from the city.

Councilmembers discussed access issues for the property, potential development challenges due to the wetland buffer, and the need for coordination with the County to resolve mapping discrepancies. Some council members expressed interest in cleaning up city limit boundaries in the area as part of this process.

Director Boles confirmed that she would move forward with the annexation process, which would include a public comment period, input from other jurisdictions, and a public hearing before the Council makes a final decision.

#### **4. Resolution XX-2025 – Welcoming Community for All and Impacts to our Local Community with Forest Service Firings**

Mayor Carl Florea presented two draft resolutions for council consideration:

1. A resolution affirming Leavenworth as a welcoming community for immigrants and requesting federal action to provide legal pathways for the existing workforce.
2. A resolution addressing concerns about Forest Service budget cuts and staffing reductions, and their potential impact on wildfire prevention and recreational area management.

The Council discussed both resolutions, with several members expressing concerns about the language and potential implications of the welcoming community resolution. Some council members suggested revising the resolution to more accurately reflect the existing legal pathways for immigration and to include input from local immigrant community organizations.

Regarding the US Forest Service resolution, council members generally supported the intent but suggested adding specific mentions of grant funding losses, such as the Community Wildfire Defense grant.

Mayor Florea agreed to revise the welcoming community resolution and bring it back for further discussion with local stakeholder input. For the US Forest Service resolution, he agreed to add language about specific funding cuts and other impacts before moving it forward for approval.

#### **5. Council Updates/Suggestions for Future Agenda Items**

The Council ran out of time to discuss this topic.


Study Session adjourned at 6:55 PM.

**APPROVED**



**Carl Florea**  
Mayor

**ATTEST**



**Andrea Fischer**  
City Clerk