

LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

May 26, 2026

Mayor Carl Florea called the May 26, 2026 Study Session to order at 5:33 PM.

Council Present: Mayor Carl Florea, Clint Strand, Anne Hessburg, Zeke Reister, Shane Thayer, Travis McMaster, Mike Bedard and Rob Eaton.

Staff Present: Matthew "Selby," Chantell Steiner and Brantley Bain.

1. Upper Valley Community Center (Osborn) Update

Recreation & Tourism Manager Steven Rubinstein presented an update on the Upper Valley Community Center project. He recapped the project's evolution from an initial indoor aquatic center concept to a broader vision now including a public library and a flexible community gathering space, with community engagement still needed to finalize the specifics of those components.

A significant update to the project vision is the formalization of the Community Resilience Hub concept. He described the hub as a facility capable of remaining operational during disasters such as wildfires or flooding, supported by solar panels and battery energy storage, with conventional backup generation also on the table. Core functions would include device charging, refrigeration for medications and communications infrastructure. He noted that this concept also unlocks several million dollars in grant funding that would otherwise be inaccessible, adding a strong financial rationale alongside the community safety benefits. He reported that community members had initiated much of the due diligence on this concept, and that he has been working with the National Laboratory of the Rockies on free technical assistance, currently scoping approximately four days of energy storage capacity. Staff also noted that the Festhalle could serve a complementary role as a resilience space given its large open floor plan, though it lacks energy independence.

On tasks currently in progress, Mr. Rubinstein reported that a long-stalled Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Facilities grant application, held up by a technical issue on the submission portal, had just received a green light to be submitted manually, with submission expected within days. He cautioned that the grant manager typically requires multiple rounds of review before approval. He also noted that a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) planning grant application, due July 15th, is forthcoming and is a simpler process.

He reported strong community interest in forming a project steering committee following a recent Upper Valley Aquatic Boosters (UVAB) meeting, with approximately seven informal applications received. Staff intends to formalize a steering committee charter and issue a transparent call for applications and ask that the City Council identify a member willing to participate on that committee.

Mr. Rubinstein then walked through the high-level project timeline. The remainder of 2026 is focused on administrative groundwork, including Public Facilities District (PFD) formation, pre-design studies and PRSA expansion planning. In 2027, early schematic designs would be developed and prepared for community engagement, with ballot measures targeting the

November 2027 general election for both the PFD sales tax measure and a PRSA property tax measure. He mentioned that Fire District #3 may also have a levy on that same ballot, and that the sequencing of these measures would require careful strategic consideration, given the historically greater difficulty of property tax measures. If the elections are successful in 2028, bond sizing would be finalized, and construction documents prepared, with bidding and contractor selection in 2029, construction running from 2029 through 2031, and a target grand opening of spring/summer 2031.

Mr. Rubinstein acknowledged that private donations and philanthropy are expected to constitute a significant share of the total project cost beyond PFD and PRSA bonding capacity. The current estimated PFD bonding capacity is approximately \$9 million, derived from a voter-approved 0.2% sales tax sufficient to retire a bond over 20 years.

The Council will be asked to pass a resolution in the future to formally initiate PFD formation, which would trigger engagement with the Washington State Department of Commerce and initiate a feasibility study estimated to take approximately three months, at a cost expected to be covered through HUD grant funds.

The Council asked questions and discussed the information that was presented.

2. Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan

City Engineer Brantley Bain presented the draft 2027–2032 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), noting it is still a draft with known errors to be corrected. The TIP is being developed concurrently with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to inform the 2027–2028 budget cycle and to support active grant applications.

Key projects reviewed included: the Parking Garage, currently under design with construction expected in early 2028 and an estimated cost of approximately \$45 million; a Roundabout Gateway Feature at the entrance to town, with staff work underway in 2026 and construction listed in 2027; the Chumstick to Titus Road Connector, a roughly \$3.5 million street connection project for which a Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC) grant decision is expected mid-June, with a Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) grant as a fallback; US 2 Pedestrian Safety Improvements, for which a \$1.8 million grant application has been submitted; Evans Street/Sherborne Street sidewalk repairs, addressing poor ADA accessibility and irregular roadway width near the Methodist Church; Scholze Street sidewalk extension; a future Pine Street/1st Street/Chumstick Roundabout estimated at \$6 million; Central Avenue sidewalk improvements to connect the future community center to Pine Street; and programmatic citywide street and sidewalk repair projects in the outer years.

Mr. Bain also noted that a citywide maintenance and repair project, funded by TIB following the failure of a prior chip seal experiment, was inadvertently omitted from the draft and will be added. The City's match for the expected \$1.5 million in TIB funds is approximately 10%. He also reported that CCTV sewer inspections recently uncovered a 12-inch rock lodged in a 15-inch diameter pipe, which will require excavation to remove, along with a few areas of pipe belly requiring future repair. No catastrophic sewer issues were found.

Councilmember Hessburg requested that the TIP format be improved to better reflect pre-construction work already underway in 2026, noting that the current format only shows construction years and does not capture ongoing design and right-of-way work. Mr. Bain agreed to explore a phased format breaking projects into preliminary development, right-of-way, and construction stages.

The Council asked questions and discussed the information that was presented.

3. Fire District #3 Firewise Discussion

Deputy Fire Chief Mike Smith presented a fuels reduction proposal for Blackbird Island, explaining that the December 2025 flooding deposited large quantities of debris, referred to as "jackpots", across the island. These jackpots consist of heavy, elevated biomass including logs up to 36 inches in diameter, which pose a significantly elevated fire risk compared to Blackbird Island's historically moderate fire danger as a riparian area. Once dried, the piles could generate spotting fires and create conditions very difficult to suppress given the island's limited equipment access.

Deputy Chief Smith recommended redirecting the \$50,000 previously allocated to the home hardening fuels reduction program toward renting heavy equipment, specifically masticators and mulchers, to break down and process the debris piles. Fire District #3 offered to assist with chipping, hand work, and coordination with the Parks Department. Kiln burning through the Cascadia Conservation District and permitted pile burning were identified as additional options, though open burning is unlikely to occur this season. Deputy Chief Smith emphasized that while \$50,000 will not resolve the entire problem, it would make a meaningful dent and reduce immediate risk near the downtown core and Front Street corridor.

Finance Director Chantell Steiner noted that a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) representative has been in contact regarding disaster cost recovery and that the City has approximately \$100,000 in unreimbursed storm-related expenses to date. She indicated FEMA timelines can extend over years but that the City must pay costs upfront.

The Council asked questions and discussed the information that was presented.

4. Council Updates/Suggestions for Future Agenda Items

Councilmember Thayer as the Parks & Recreation Service Area (PRSA) board chairperson, raised the question of rolling over the approximately \$2,000–\$2,500 previously approved for UVAB's Splash Bash event, which did not occur last year due to the pool not opening on time, so that the funds could be used for this year's June event.

Finance Director Steiner confirmed that for such a small amount, Council consensus would suffice and a formal agenda item is not required. She reminded UVAB that future funding requests should be submitted through the Leavenworth Fund process.

Study Session adjourned at 6:56 PM.

APPROVED

ATTEST

Steady State
Signed by:
May 26, 2026

Carl Florea

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Carl Florea
Mayor

Signed by:

Andrea Fischer

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Andrea Fischer
City Clerk