

LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 27, 2026

Mayor Carl Florea called the January 27, 2026 Study Session to order at 5:3X 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, Maggie Boles, Andi Zontek-Backstrum, Brantley Bain and Andrea Fischer.

1. Public Works Department Annual Report

Public Works Director Andi Zontek-Backstrum began by introducing the Public Works Department leadership team which consists of Brantley Bain, City Engineer; Rick Emmons, Streets & Utilities Supervisor; John Schons, Parks Supervisor; Chris Klancke, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor; Kyle Breaux, Water Recovery Resource Facility (WRRF) Supervisor; Ara Arakelian, Facility Maintenance Supervisor; and Sue Cragun, Contract and Grant Coordinator. She noted there were a total of 33 positions in the department. She highlighted that 2025 had seen significant staffing changes with 11 new hires across most divisions.

The presentation covered the department's goals for 2026, many of which were being carried over from 2025. These goals included extracting institutional knowledge and tracking work data, enhancing workplace culture, and completing policy and process improvements. The department had made progress on all these goals in 2025, but they represented ongoing objectives rather than one-year targets.

For 2026, specific objectives under the first goal of extracting institutional knowledge, included prioritizing internal standards for materials and equipment to ensure consistency across projects and advancing standard operating procedures to help with staff transitions. Under the second goal of enhancing workplace culture, plans included conducting team safety meetings, implementing check-in procedures for remote operations, continuing cross-training efforts, and providing technology training. The third goal of completing policy and process improvements included developing a 100-year capital plan for utilities, advancing the capital improvement program, modifying equipment replacement timelines, expanding preventative maintenance, improving construction oversight, increasing involvement in emergency management, strengthening cybersecurity, enhancing internal and external relationships, improving interdepartmental communication and refining recycling center service expectations.

The leadership team was asked about cross-training, which was clarified as including both training within the same division and training between different divisions. Mr. Emmons explained that in his division, garbage truck drivers who finish their routes early join other crews to learn skills like safely digging for water leaks, enhancing overall team capability. Mr. Breaux noted that sometimes utility crew members help with wastewater operations like hauling biosolids.

The Public Works department conducted an anonymous survey to gauge employee satisfaction. Results showed slight decreases in various metrics compared to the previous year, though Director Zontek-Backstrum noted significant staffing turnover meant different respondents. The survey covered how comfortable employees felt providing feedback at different organizational

levels, and how appreciated and supported they felt. Open-ended responses indicated employees appreciated their coworkers and wanted recognition through informal acknowledgments rather than public recognition in group settings.

Mr. Emmons expressed appreciation to the Council for supporting equipment upgrades, noting they had acquired more new equipment than ever before, which had significantly improved efficiency. For example, a new vacuum truck had reduced water leak repair time by approximately half. Mr. Breaux highlighted the importance of infrastructure upgrades for aging lift stations, mentioning that during a recent storm event, they had to rewire generators to maintain service.

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

2. Triplex and Residential Design Standards Discussion

Community Development Director Maggie Boles presented proposed updates to the Leavenworth Municipal Code (LMC) to permit triplexes in all residential zones and refine residential design standards. She sought Council feedback ahead of a public hearing to be scheduled for the end of February.

The proposal included adding a purpose statement to the section and clarifying applicability. A significant discussion ensued about how to handle existing structures and developed lots. The current draft stated that "new additions and structures shall comply with the standards to the greatest extent feasible," but Councilmembers expressed concern about the subjectivity of this language and how it might be interpreted differently by future staff. Director Boles and the Council discussed the challenge of applying new design standards to existing properties, particularly century-old homes that might have been built in locations that make compliance difficult. They considered options for creating a more formal administrative deviation process that would allow property owners to show why they couldn't meet certain requirements. The Council emphasized the importance of maintaining design standards to prevent "Franken houses" when properties are modified, while other Councilmembers noted it would be impossible to create firm language for every scenario and suggested the standards should encourage thoughtful consideration rather than rigid requirements.

The Council reviewed specific standards including:

- A 15% glazing requirement for walls facing the street
- Weather protection standards requiring covered entries
- Articulation and modulation standards to break up building mass for structures over 30 feet in length
- Limitations on garage fronts to not exceed 40% of the facade

The Council agreed to require at least two design elements for articulation and modulation rather than just one, and to clarify that features could count for multiple requirements. They also supported exempting pre-approved dwelling units from certain standards to avoid creating nonconformities.

Director Boles stated she would revise the language based on feedback and bringing an updated draft before scheduling a public hearing.

3. Resolution XX-2026 – Purchasing and Procurement Policy

City Engineer Brantley Bain and Contracts & Grant Coordinator Sue Cragun presented significant updates to the City's Purchasing and Procurement Policy. The changes primarily reflected updates based on feedback from the State Auditor's Office, Washington State law and best practices from the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC).

Ms. Cragun explained that she had reformatted the document to be more user-friendly, color-coding different procurement processes and adding links to relevant items. Major updates included:

- Adding a code of ethics section required by state auditors
- Clarifying federal versus state procurement requirements
- Updating public works procurement thresholds
- Creating a clearer table format for different procurement types

Due to time constraints, the Council was not able to discuss the policy in detail but was invited to email questions or comments for future consideration.

4. Council Updates/Suggestions for Future Agenda Items

There was no discussion on this item due to time constraints.

Study Session adjourned at 6:55 PM.

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Carl Florea

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Carl Florea

Mayor

ATTEST

Signed by:

Andrea Fischer

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Andrea Fischer

City Clerk