

LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

February 24, 2026

Mayor Carl Florea called the February 24, 2026 Study Session to order at 5:31 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, Brantley Bain and Andrea Fischer.

1. Parking Garage Update – ARC Architects

Jeff Wandasiewicz from ARC Architects presented an update on the Downtown Parking Garage Feasibility & Design – Phase 1 (Site Selection) project. The team has been exploring two location options within 1,000 feet of Front Street Park: the Dragontail and Enchantment site (D&E) near the library and City hall, and the Aasgard and Blewett site (A&B) across from the Festhalle and Starbucks. The goal is to add 200+ parking stalls while meeting various criteria including efficiency, accessibility and potential for amenities.

The team explored eight total options across both sites and conducted community engagement to gather public feedback. Two options at the Aasgard/Blewett site emerged as clear favorites both from the design team and the public. These options received overwhelmingly positive feedback during the community engagement session, with residents appreciating that the site is on the south side of Highway 2, avoiding the need for pedestrians to cross the highway, and utilizing the existing recessed "pit" area of the Blewett lot.

The Council asked whether locations outside the downtown core, such as behind Safeway, had been considered. City Administrator Selby explained that the RFQ specifically required locations within 1,000 feet of Front Street Park based on a financial analysis in our most recent parking study completed by Rick Williams Consulting. A garage behind Safeway would require shuttling costs and compete with abundant free parking in that area, making it financially unviable compared to a downtown location that could leverage paid parking demand.

The two preferred options both utilize the Aasgard/Blewett site. The first option involves building within the existing "pit" area, requiring replacement of current shoring walls that were not designed to support new structures. This option includes potential City office space on the top level. The second option, which was similarly well-received, features commercial space at street level to create a building that appears more like a traditional downtown structure rather than just a parking garage.

The Council inquired about the determination of the 200-stall requirement, with Administrator Selby confirming this number came from Rick Williams' analysis. They also asked about community preferences, and the architect noted that residents consistently favored more parking over other amenities, with the consensus being "the more parking, the better."

He clarified access points and circulation patterns, explaining that both preferred options would have multiple vehicle access points including existing connections to Highway 2, Front Street and the Blewett Annex. The designs ensure the garage level connects seamlessly with the existing Aasgard surface lot elevation.

The next phase will involve developing building concepts that fit the Bavarian Alpine theme and creating detailed site plans with refined cost estimates. The feasibility study will conclude with the team's final recommendation.

The Council asked about construction timeline and disruption. Mr. Wandasiewicz estimated it would be around 12-18 months from groundbreaking to completion, during which the Blewett area would be completely offline and portions of Aasgard could potentially be phased, requiring alternative parking arrangements during construction.

The Council raised questions about the downtown revitalization proposal to close ninth Street and extend tenth Street through to Highway 2. Mr. Wandasiewicz reported that their consultants had examined this possibility but found two major obstacles: an electrical transformer at the terminus of tenth Street that would be cost-prohibitive to relocate, and their traffic consultant's belief that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) would not approve another curb cut on Highway 2. The Council requested that the City officially ask WSDOT about this possibility to get a definitive answer rather than relying on consultant assumptions.

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

2. Recycling Center Update & Discussion

City Administrator Selby led a comprehensive discussion about the future of the City's recycling center following Waste Loop's decision to cease operations and transfer activities to Sustainable NCW. Sustainable NCW has indicated they are not interested in continuing to operate the recycling center as it currently exists but would like to explore expanding glass recycling partnerships.

Administrator Selby explained that the recycling center, which operates only a few hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays, is funded by the garbage enterprise fund. This arrangement is a holdover from when the City provided garbage service to all residents before contracting with Waste Management in 2019 for residential collection. He expressed concern that the center primarily serves residents while being funded by commercial and multifamily accounts, which he considers a misappropriation of the garbage enterprise funds.

The center faces ongoing challenges with non-residents using the facility, particularly the yard-waste container which fills up almost immediately during operating hours. The City has approved a contract with Winton MFG Compost Works to provide curbside yard waste pickup within City limits starting this spring, offering residents an alternative service.

The Council suggested surveying residents to determine if they would be willing to pay for continued recycling services rather than eliminating the center entirely. He noted that many residents bring brush and yard waste in quantities too large for standard curbside containers, making the drop-off center valuable for handling larger loads that exceed typical pickup capacity.

The Council questioned how many residents actually use the service, noting observations of busy activity but lacking specific usage data. Ariaahna Jones from Waste Loop indicated they have conducted usage surveys that could be shared with City staff.

The discussion also explored expanding glass recycling services for downtown businesses, which generate significant glass waste from wineries and restaurants. Administrator Selby noted that one downtown winery had stopped recycling glass when pickup services ended, simply throwing the glass away instead. Ariaahna Jones and Marlene Farrell from Sustainable NCW explained that

Study Session Minutes
February 24, 2026

most downtown businesses share waste collection services with neighboring businesses in multi-tenant buildings, which complicates individual glass collection arrangements.

Ms. Farrell described their organization's broader efforts to establish regional glass recycling, including potential partnerships with Chelan County at the Dryden Transfer Station. She emphasized the value of uncontaminated glass and suggested that removing yard waste from the recycling center could create space for expanded glass collection.

The council discussed various models from other communities, including scheduled collection events and volunteer-led pickup services for businesses.

Administrator Selby concluded that while he could support using garbage enterprise funds for glass pickup services since they would reduce tipping fees for commercial accounts, he maintained his opposition to using those funds for residential yard waste services.

The Council was concerned about anticipated heavy usage in the coming spring due to storm debris throughout the community. The Council discussed temporarily reopening the cemetery location used for post-storm debris collection to handle the expected surge in yard waste, with proper monitoring to ensure only City residents use the service.

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

The Council asked staff to consider developing a community survey, gather usage data from current operations and schedule a focused public meeting on the recycling center's future soon.

Study Session adjourned at 7:00 PM.

APPROVED
DocuSigned by:

Carl Florea

A8B4411C12AB49D...

Carl Florea

Mayor

ATTEST
Signed by:

Andrea Fischer

D5CBE4ADA51B451...

Andrea Fischer

City Clerk