

LEAVENWORTH CITY STUDY SESSION MINUTES

April 14, 2026

Mayor Florea called the April 14, 2026 Study Session to order at 5:31 PM.

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

Staff Present: Matthew "Selby", Chantell Steiner, Celeste Barry, Brantley Bain and Andrea Fischer.

1. Chamber Report

Troy Campbell, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, presented the monthly Chamber report. He opened with a discussion of foot traffic data, noting that March was difficult, with overall footfalls down approximately 14% year-over-year. April month-to-date had improved significantly, with figures running only 3% below the prior year, aided by a particularly strong mid-week period. He acknowledged that gas prices and broader economic factors are expected to continue creating struggle throughout the year.

He provided an overview of upcoming May promotions, with Maifest as the centerpiece. He highlighted several new additions to the festival, including a Maibaum (Maipole), a new beer garden and a second entertainment stage at the Festhalle featuring Manuela Horn, who would perform a children's program in the morning and a more adult-themed performance in the evening. Returning traditions such as the Bavarian Festzug (Parade) which includes a new route, Tirolean dancers and traditional Maipole dances with Bavarian Music and Alphorns.

Beyond Maifest, he highlighted the Celtic Festival, Rockfest, Birdfest, and the Alphorn Festival as part of a broader May promotional push.

Director Campbell offered a preview of the Chamber's upcoming 2025 annual report, noting that 8 of the top 10 busiest pedestrian days in 2025 occurred during Chamber events, all 10 when including Village of Lights, and that 30.4 percent of Leavenworth businesses are in the accommodation, food service, and retail sectors.

On the Recreation Ambassador Program, he reported that 6 of the 20 available slots had already been filled. He noted that he had requested \$40,000 from the County to fund paid staff, though he expressed doubt that the full amount would be awarded. He also reported that he had presented a program at the Wenatchee River Institute and also to the Washington Trails Association about the recreation ambassador program.

He closed with updates on exterior improvements at the new Chamber Visitor Center at 645 Front Street and the forthcoming publication of the Chamber's destination guide and map.

2. Financial Policy Review/Update

Finance Director Chantell Steiner presented the annual Financial Policy review. She noted that no changes were made in 2025, so the document under consideration reflected the 2024 version and includes three redline revisions that were reviewed by the Finance Committee at its March meeting.

The three proposed changes were:

- a title update on page 4, changing "Deputy Clerk" to "Deputy Treasurer"
- a change on page 8 returning the water fund reserve requirement to the standard 25 percent (three months of expenditures), following the near-completion of the Wells to Mill Icicle Water Main project
- an update on page 10 to the Cemetery Endowment Fund, reflecting the City's internal decision to direct all cemetery plot sale proceeds to the endowment fund to accelerate its growth, with the dollar balance updated to reflect current figures.

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

After discussion, the Council raised no objections or proposed additional changes. This will be brought back for action at the May 12th meeting if not earlier.

3. Comprehensive Plan Review/Updates

Community Development Senior Planner Celeste Barry presented in place of Director Maggie Boles.

She confirmed that four sections had been distributed for Council review: the Transportation Element, the Capital Facilities Element, the Parks and Recreation Element, and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS Plan). She invited Council to provide comments and flag any additions or deletions before the documents are finalized and sent to the Planning Commission for review and a public hearing.

- Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan

City Administrator Selby raised the need to prioritize adoption of the PROS Plan in advance of the other comprehensive plan elements. He explained that the City's newly hired Recreation and Tourism Manager, Steven Rubinstein, had identified a \$200,000 planning grant through the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) that could support feasibility planning for the Osborn Property and Community Center/Library project. A key eligibility requirement is that the PROS Plan must be adopted by July 15, 2026. He asked Council for a temperature check on prioritizing this element before moving forward with grant preparation.

Ms. Barry confirmed that the PROS Plan, as a standalone document, can be adopted independently from the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. She noted the plan is approximately 67–70 pages and had not previously existed in our Comprehensive Plan. Council expressed broad support for this approach.

Mr. Rubinstein indicated that grant applications open May 13, and that the sooner the plan is adopted, the more time staff would have to prepare a strong proposal. He noted that the new indoor pool and community center concept tied to the Osborn Property Vision Project appears to already be referenced in the draft plan, though he flagged that he would need to confirm whether the level of detail is sufficient to satisfy grant reviewers. Ms. Barry stated

she believed the PROS Plan could be placed on an upcoming study session agenda for review, with the Parks and Recreation Element to follow.

- Transportation Element

The Council identified two concerns with the Transportation Element. First, on page 5, the street system figure's legend color for private roads was nearly invisible and needed to be made visually distinct. Ms. Barry confirmed this was a reasonable fix.

Second, on page 7, figure 2 (Bicycle and Pedestrian), the proposed pedestrian undercrossing at Highway 2 was difficult to locate on the map because the highway label was overlapping the symbol. Barry confirmed the label could be moved. A broader discussion followed regarding whether this project should remain in the plan at all, given that it is listed on the State's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for approximately 2035–2037. City Engineer Brantley Bain noted that ADA compliance and snow removal present significant challenges for an overpass alternative, and that he had informally discussed with a grantor the possibility of redirecting those funds to a more likely pedestrian or multiuse trail project. However, given the project's distant timeline, he recommended deferring any formal redirection effort until a suitable substitute project is identified, likely within the next two to five years. Council and staff agreed it was prudent to leave the project in the plan to preserve the funding and political positioning associated with it.

Council also discussed a section in the transportation appendix (pages 83–91) describing "advisory bike lanes," in which vehicles from both directions share a center lane. Several Councilmembers expressed strong concern that this configuration was unsafe, particularly in a snowy, pedestrian-heavy environment. She clarified the content was intended as a background reference documenting option, not a recommended policy. Council directed that the advisory bike lane concept be removed from the document, while protected bike lanes would remain.

- Capital Facilities Element

The Council raised a concern on page 11 regarding a section titled "Parking Lots" that also addressed on-street parking. It was noted that on-street parking is not a capital facility, it exists within the right-of-way and suggested separating the two topics into distinct subsections. It was also pointed out that the current language emphasized a decrease in on-street parking stalls without acknowledging the City's recent additions of managed parking lots and felt it presented an incomplete picture. It was also mentioned that documenting the loss of on-street stalls alongside the need for a parking garage could support future grant applications for that facility, and that the framing should reflect both trends accurately. Ms. Barry agreed to revise the section.

Administrator Selby raised a concern regarding the categorization of certain services, including the library, transit, and hospital, under a heading of "Non-City Provided Capital Facilities." He noted that the City owns the building in which the library operates, with the NCW Regional Library leasing the space. He argued that lumping services like the library under a capital facilities header was potentially misleading. After discussion, staff agreed the library should be acknowledged under the "Public Buildings and Facilities" section as a service housed within a City-owned facility. It was also clarified that the City owns the capital improvements at the train station, including the platform, parking lot, and

restrooms, so the train station should therefore be listed as a City-owned facility, distinct from the Amtrak service itself. Ms. Barry agreed to make the necessary revisions.

Ms. Barry confirmed that the PROS Plan and Parks and Recreation Element would be brought back for Council review at the next available study session for in-depth discussion.

4. Council Updates/Suggestions for Future Agenda Items

- River Recreation and Shuttle Service

Councilmember Travis McMaster asked for clarification on the Recreation Ambassador Program and how it relates to the City. Administrator Selby clarified that the program is funded and operated by the Chamber, and that most of its activity occurs outside City limits. He noted that collaboration between the City, the Chamber, the County, and the Fish Hatchery on river recreation matters was well established and would continue, with Recreation & Tourism Manager Steven Rubinstein representing the City in a core river recreation coordination group. Mr. Rubinstein reported that he had sent an RFP for the river shuttle service and is anticipating that the previous vendor would again be selected, with the expectation that they would provide their own trailer this year.

- Chamber Contract Negotiation

Mayor Pro Tempore Hessburg raised the upcoming need to negotiate the Chamber contract. Administrator Selby confirmed that drafting the contract is on his work plan and that he hoped to complete it within the month. He noted that at the most recent Chamber board meeting, he had encouraged them to identify two or three board members to form a negotiation team, mirroring a proposed Council negotiating group. He invited council members to volunteer. Councilmember Eaton and Councilmember Hessburg indicated their interest, with Councilmember McMaster volunteering as an alternate.

- Golf Course Proposal

It was noted that Councilmembers had received an email from a community member regarding a proposal for the golf course property. She reported that she had individually responded and directed him to attend the Housing Advisory Committee meeting later in the month and clarified that no formal Council session on the topic had been scheduled, contrary to suggestions circulating on social media.

Councilmember Bedard and Councilmember Reister provided additional context. They explained that the Housing Advisory Committee had issued a broad request for ideas related to workforce housing and received multiple proposals. The golf course concept, proposing redevelopment of the City-owned golf course property, did not precisely fit the criteria of the RFI, but the committee felt it warranted separate consideration given its potential community significance and the fact that the golf club is planning significant capital investments tied to a long-term lease. A housing committee subcommittee was formed specifically to evaluate this proposal, and the full Council is scheduled to discuss it with the Housing Advisory Committee and the Golf Club at the April 28th study session, with one hour dedicated to that conversation. Administrator Selby noted that he had already met with golf club board members to ensure they were aware of the concept before committing to capital expenditures.

Leavenworth Study Session Minutes
April 14, 2026

It was clarified that the golf club's pending capital planning decisions, including loans that would extend beyond their current lease terms, made it prudent to resolve the question sooner rather than later, and that Council discussion is intended simply to determine whether to pursue the idea further or close the door to it.

The Mayor noted that he had published a letter on the City website that same day to help inform the public on the topic ahead of the upcoming discussion.

- Community Aesthetics

A community member had raised two concerns with Councilmember McMaster. The first related to the appearance of the rear of a commercial building near the City's entry corridor, described as being in disrepair. Administrator Selby explained that the City's code does not require aesthetic upgrades unless a property owner applies for a building permit for significant improvements, at which point Bavarian design standards would apply.

The second item was a suggestion from a community member to commission a mural on the concrete face of the Highway 2 bridge. Any such project would require design approval from the Washington State Department of Transportation. Administrator Selby noted that given existing funding and a committed individual to drive the roundabout public art project already on the 2026 work plan, that project should be completed first before pursuing the bridge mural concept.

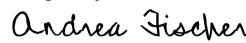
Study Session adjourned at 6:47 PM.

APPROVED

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Carl Florea
Mayor

ATTEST

Signed by:

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Andrea Fischer
City Clerk