



**Approved Minutes**

## **Regular City of Athol City Council Meeting**

Held in the Council Room in City Hall

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026**

### **Council Meeting**

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**Mayor Ruch called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.**

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Mayor Ruch; Councilwoman Devine; Councilman McDaniel; Councilwoman Porter; Councilwoman Kramer; City Clerk/Treasurer-Lori Yarbrough; Public Works-Pete Weigman; Nick Peterson, Attorney (via phone), Rand Wichman, City Planner, and Deputy Clerk, Amanda Clark. Not Present: 0.

#### **REPORTS:**

**TREASURY REPORT** – Lori submitted the January 2026 report; Lori read the ending STCU Checking account balance on the report was \$149,065.71; the ending Savings/Money Market account was \$42,243.71; and the ending LGIP account balance was \$1,769,512.08. The P1FCU Money Market was \$80,860.64 and the savings was \$59,653.95.

**WATER REPORT-** Lori submitted a written report. Lori shared the January usage was 2,736,404 gallons; coin haulers were 187,300 gallons. January billed utilities were \$25,376.00, overage \$608.00, and monies collected was \$26,569.00. Lori said she forgot to look at how many late accounts this month and thought they were maybe 3 or 4 shut off notices.

**PLANNER REPORT** – Rand submitted a written report and recapped: Area of Impact- At the last council meeting Rand shared he thinks the county is going to take the position that they will closely scrutinize the various request for Areas of Impact and are likely to lump every city together with the 660 feet one parcel distance; but had asked council to think about it before deciding. This will be discussed as an action later in tonight's meeting. Sheep Springs Road- Rand shared his slow progress and is waiting now for the agreements with the Tallents from the engineers. Once those documents have been completed and signed he will work with ITD to get the easements and approaches correct and up to date. Audit Assistance – Lori asked for Rand's help with the audit regarding the estimated cost of infrastructure from four different projects over the past couple of years. Area of Impact Project – Heiberger Storage – This project has been working with the county for a conditional use permit, and the city has previously provided a comment letter to the county last September. This request may be back in front of the council again as they have revised their proposal. Highway 54/Railroad Grade Separation – ITD has scheduled a Zoom meeting with stakeholders to discuss funding opportunities for the long- discussed Highway 54 railroad grade separation. The meeting is scheduled for February 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

**1) APPROVAL OF THE February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting minutes:**

**Motion by Porter**, that we approve the meeting minutes for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, without amendments.

**\*DISCUSSION \*** All in favor-any opposed. **Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

*NOTE: The City will make reasonable accommodations for anyone attending this meeting who require special assistance for hearing, physical or other impairments. Please contact the City Clerk at (208) 683-2101 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting date and time.*

2) **APPROVAL OF BILLS AS SUBMITTED: Motion by Devine that we approve paying the February/March bills as submitted without amendments.** \*DISCUSSION- Lori briefly shared a few uncommon bills. All in favor-any opposed. **Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

3) **DISCUSSION/APPROVAL for a Water Tank Inspection on the Water Tower on Menser.** \*DISCUSSION – Pete explained that he’s asking for two different types of inspections, a different one for each of the tanks. He gathered three different bids from companies locally but recommended a survey/inspection from Bruce Larkin for \$1,250.00 involves only inspecting in and around the cemetery tanks as they are the newest and only about 3 years old. As for the Menser water tower he recommended using Aqua Drone which uses a drone to go into the tanks and inspect. This was primarily because about 6 plus years ago, before doing the big water improvements, we had this same type of inspection done and there were signs of some beginning rust spots. Our due diligence and age of the tank he feels would be best served with this more in-depth inspection, costing \$2,850.00, for a grand total of about \$4,050.00. Pete also had a short conversation with the council about how doing these inspections helps the city when they get reviewed by DEQ. After this discussion the following motion was made: **Motion by Kramer, to recommend approving getting the Water Tower on Menser Ave Inspected; not to exceed \$4,050.00.** **Roll Call Vote: Devine-yes; McDaniel-yes; Kramer-yes; Porter-yes. Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

4) **DISCUSSION/APPROVAL to purchase a New Fire Hydrant (5<sup>th</sup> St. & Hwy 54) in front of the Fire Station.** Pete began explaining the history he has gathered on this hydrant and understands this not to be a new issue, but one he’s now trying to address. He gave a brief explanation of his research in the cost and uncertainty of parts fitting the older hydrant verses spending a bit more money and just purchasing a new one. He recommended to the council to just purchase a new hydrant. The council asked a few questions then made the following motion: **Motion by McDaniel, to approve the purchase of a new fire hydrant; not to exceed \$5,000.00.**\*DISCUSSION NOTE- **Roll Call: Kramer-yes; McDaniel-yes; Porter-yes; Devine-yes; Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

5) **DISCUSSION/APPROVAL to purchase a Tilt Deck Trailer.** Pete shared his desire to purchase a trailer for a number of reasons such as moving the bleachers, getting the mower up to the cemetery, moving various equipment or pipes, and just the ability to move equipment around when renting or if we own things in the future. After that discussion he shared some of the prices for such trailers he found and ultimately made a recommendation to the council; the following motion was made: **Motion by McDaniel, to approve the purchase of a tilt deck trailer; not to exceed \$6,900.00.** \*DISCUSSION **Roll Call Vote: Devine-yes; McDaniel-yes; Kramer-yes; Porter-yes. Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

6) **DISCUSSION/APPROVAL Regarding the Area of Impact with Kootenai County** Rand led this discussion and reminded the Council of information he shared at the previous meeting, and his suspicions regarding the county commissioners posturing of the proposed changes. He asked council if anyone did more research or reached out to any commissioners and what they wanted to do. Councilwoman Porter shared that she did speak with a commissioner and feels we should leave our proposal as it is and not adjust to the 660 ft that the “big 3 cities” just had to do, citing Athol is different and we are not up against other cities. After a brief discussion amongst the council the following motion was made: **Motion by Porter, to request Rand draft a letter from the Mayor with the original proposal of the 2 miles as to follow with the state requirements of the Area of Impact.** \*DISCUSSION **Roll Call Vote: McDaniel-yes; Kramer-yes; Porter-yes; Devine-yes. Motion passed. ACTION ITEM**

## **DISCUSSION ITEM:**

- 7) **Discuss Amending City Ordinance Section: 4-3 Animal Control (Does the council want to consider removing “Cats” from the Animal Control section of the city ordinances.)** Lori led this conversation sharing that city staff is wondering if the council would consider removing “cats” from the current city ordinances. She gave a little bit of history in that we have yet to print a ticket book, because for the county animal control units to pick up strays the city needs to have a contract of where the cats could be taken and there are no local facilities that will take cats. It really is not something that can be enforced and is ultimately delaying us in getting them to act on some dog citations as well. Both Councilman McDaniel and Pete also added their understanding with recent conversations with the county animal control staff; there was a bit of confusion in the whole process but at the end of the discussion the majority of the council seemed amiable to the idea. Staff will work with the attorney to bring recommended changes to a future council meeting for possible changes to that ordinance.
- 8) **Set a Workshop Date to continue reviewing the updates to the Sign Ordinance** – Lori didn’t get any possible dates ready in time so we will push this to the next meeting discussion.
- 9) **AIC District Training – Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup> from 8:45am to 3pm CDA** – Lori reminded the council of the upcoming AIC training and that she knows there are a lot of legislative matters that will be discussed at this meeting; council members to let her know if they plan on attending so she can sign them up.
- 10) **Panhandle Health District – Set a workshop time to discuss a possible Critical Material Ordinance and MOU if interested.** Councilman McDaniel shared that he and Lori met with Jenny Gray with the Aquifer Protection Program Department with Panhandle Health District (PHD), which information was included in the council packet, including what the county, CDA, Post Falls and Hayden have all agreed to. Now they are asking the smaller cities to do the same thing. This is a critical material program that has been going on for several decades but as PHD lost their rule-making authority they just operate it as is, they would like to be extended authority within each jurisdiction to continue doing what they do, protecting the aquifer from various businesses that handle critical materials. It just helps ensure safe handling. They provided the city with a list of 16 businesses they currently work with. After a short discussion the majority of the council was interested in such agreement with PHD and didn’t think they needed any additional workshops with PHD. Staff will draft up the documents and get the attorney’s review of them and bring it back to the council for a more formal discussion and proposal. For any council that wanted more information Lori will provide Jenny’s contact information to help them with any additional questions they may have.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS: City Council Councilwoman Devine**- Wanted to hear the update on the Kootenai Electric bill. Lori shared that it was an oversight on staff’s part and we over paid. The bill sent to us also included the previous month’s billing and the check we sent for payment had not yet been applied. So, there will be credit on that account. There are small increases throughout the bill and Amanda was going to begin tracking these going forward. The council was reassured that the bill did not actually double the cost for each month. / **Mayor – none.** / **Staff Lori**- 1) She shared there is an IRWA training being hosted here on March 5<sup>th</sup>, she will email you the specifics if you are interested. 2) Lori shared that Amanda will be here for the next council meeting since she will be missing that meeting. 3) Lori also wanted to remind council that it’s important to watch their emails from AIC because they give a great update on the legislative matters and there appears to be a number of bigger ones that could change things for the cities. She mentioned a few she’s seeing or hearing about and urged the council to watch for them as some may cost the city more to comply. **Pete**- 1) Shared that ITD appears to be putting some signage up to along the Highway corridor to prevent people from selling dogs, panhandling, or parking in the rights of way. 2) He also wanted to give Council a notice


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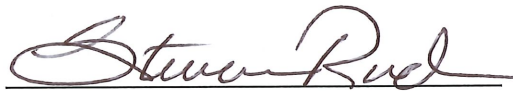
that due to legislative changes and things that have happened in other areas of the county, DEQ has some testing requirements now for PFAS that will ultimately cost the city more. So as the budget is evaluated for next year there will be additional testing requirements the city will need to comply with. These are very similar to the lead and copper testing requirements and the frequency in which they are required is increasing.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: none**

**ADJOURNMENT at 8:44pm**

**ATTEST:**

  
**Lori Yarbrough, City Clerk/Treasurer**

  
**Steven Ruch, Mayor**

Approved at Council on 3/5/2026