

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:00PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Hedrick, Councilmember Syler, Councilmember Jensen, and Councilmember Holland. Councilmember Huson was excused. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the agenda with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Hopkins administered the Oath of Office for City Clerk, Mario A. Ortega, Jr.

MINUTES - Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes for the regular Council Meeting of November 5, 2024, with a second from Councilmember Syler. Councilmember Jensen moved to amend the minutes with two corrections to the General Public Comment section and Business section. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes as amended, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

STAFF REPORT –

Ruston Police Chief Bautista – See attached.

Ruston Fire Chief Allen – See attached.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS –

David Bell – Expressed concern about the budget deficit the City is currently facing and inquired about the resources the City has available to address this issue.

Leah D. – Expressed gratitude for being a resident of Ruston and shared her optimism regarding the budget.

Ed R. – Resident of Tacoma, expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, describing it as unfair, overreaching, and inefficient. Ed argued that the ordinance's details would not effectively address the underlying issues but instead would hinder local businesses. Ed suggested that the City should focus on building relationships with the owners, operators, and employees of establishments to identify common interests and collaborate on fostering positive change

Nicholas – Resident of Tacoma, expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, specifically highlighting the historical significance of the Unicorn and its role as an established gathering place for patrons to socialize peacefully. Nicholas emphasized that restricting the operating hours of the Unicorn would have a detrimental impact on the community.

BUSINESS –

ORD 1586 – Sanitary Sewer Rates – (2nd reading) - Under State law, the City is authorized to provide sanitary sewer services to properties within its jurisdiction. As a sanitary sewer utility provider, the City may establish charges for sanitary sewer service. Under an interlocal agreement, the City of Tacoma accepts the flow from Ruston sanitary sewers for the purpose of providing sewage treatment. The City of Ruston pays Tacoma for this service.

The last time the City of Ruston changed its rates was in March of 2023 via adoption of Ordinance No. 1567. Ordinance No. 1567 included a two-step increase that were effective March 21, 2023 and January 21, 2024. Since that time, the City of Tacoma has instituted several sewer rate increases. This ordinance does not change the fixed rate for Ruston customers, which has remained unchanged since 2017, but it does bring the flow charges equal to what Tacoma charges its customers for flow charges for both 2025 and 2026.

As is the City’s practice for utilities, rate increases are passed through to its ratepayers to ensure continued financial viability of the sanitary sewer utility. The rate increases are outlined below, including a look back at 2023 rates.

Rate Type	2023	Increase	2024	Increase	2025	Increase	2026
Fixed Rate - RES	\$67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67
Flow Charge - RES	\$5.65	\$0.40	\$6.05	\$0.22	\$6.27	\$0.07	\$6.34
Fixed Rate - COM - Categorized	\$55.60	\$-0-	\$55.60	\$-0-	\$55.60	\$-0-	\$55.60
Flow Charge - COM by Category							
1	\$7.84	\$0.63	\$8.47	\$0.26	\$8.73	\$0.44	\$9.17
2	\$8.46	\$0.68	\$9.14	\$0.64	\$9.78	\$0.74	\$10.52
3	\$10.65	\$0.86	\$11.51	\$0.52	\$12.03	\$0.79	\$12.82
4	\$12.51	\$1.01	\$13.52	\$0.61	\$14.13	\$0.92	\$15.05
5	\$12.70	\$1.02	\$13.72	\$1.24	\$14.96	\$1.13	\$16.09
6	\$14.56	\$1.17	\$15.73	\$1.18	\$16.91	\$1.19	\$18.10
7	\$16.45	\$1.32	\$17.77	\$1.34	\$19.11	\$1.34	\$20.45
8	\$17.02	\$1.37	\$18.39	\$1.48	\$19.87	\$1.40	\$21.27
Fixed Rate - COM - Not Categorized	\$66.96	\$-0-	\$66.96	\$-0-	\$66.96	\$-0-	\$66.96
Flow Charge - COM - Not Categorized	\$5.65	\$0.40	\$6.05	\$0.22	\$6.27	\$0.07	\$6.34

The City Council held a Public Hearing on this Ordinance during Second Reading on November 19, 2024. By increasing the sanitary sewer flow rates to be the same as Tacoma charges its sanitary sewer customers for flow for 2025 and 2026, the City will ensure that its sanitary sewer utility is self-sustaining and that these increased costs were born by the ratepayers rather than the general

public. Councilmember Hendrick moved to approve Ordinance 1586, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ORD 1587 – Public Hearing – Budget FY2025 – Councilmember Hendrick moved to open Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Syler. There was no public comment, Councilmember Hendrick moved to closed Public Hearing with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ORD 1587 – Budget FY2025 (2nd Reading) - In accordance with State law, the Mayor of the City of Ruston will complete and place on file with the City Clerk-Treasurer a proposed preliminary budget and estimate of the amount of monies required to meet the public expenses, interest, reserve funds, and expense of government of the city of Ruston for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025. The Council is required to adopt its budget ordinance prior to January 1, 2025.

On October 15, 2024 the Council held a public hearing regarding property taxes and the 2025 tax levy. On November 5, 2024, the Council held a preliminary public hearing to hear from the public about their budget priorities. The final public hearing on the budget was held on November 19, 2024. The final public hearing must take place prior to budget adoption. The City is required to pass the budget before the end of this calendar year.

The City Council Budget consideration schedule for Fiscal Year 2025 is as follows:

Mayor’s Budget Message to Council:	_____, 2024
Council discussion of revenue sources:	October 15, 2024
Public Hearing on Revenue Sources	October 15, 2024
Public Hearing on Preliminary Budget	November 5, 2024
Adoption of Tax Levy Ordinance No. 1583	November 5, 2024
Public Hearing on Proposed Budget	November 19, 2024
Budget Discussion #1:	October 15, 2025
Budget Discussion #2:	November 5, 2025
Budget Discussion #3:	November 19, 2025
Budget Discussion #4:	December 3, 2024
Adoption of Final Annual Budget for 2024	December 3 or 17, 2024

Prior to budget adoption, the City Clerk will have fully complied with state law by publishing notice of the availability of the budget for public review and publishing notice of the required public hearings on the City’s proposed tax levy and budget, including a preliminary and final budget hearing.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The proposed Total Revenues forecasted are \$8,242,302, consisting of Beginning Balances in the amount of \$2,064,722 plus interfund transfers in of \$307,000, and operating revenues of \$5,870,580. The Total Expenditures proposed are \$8,242,302, consisting of operating expenses in

the amount of \$5,975,270, plus Interfund transfers out of \$307,000, and Ending Balances of \$1,960,032. The proposed budget by funds is as follows:

Fund	Fund Name	2025 Revenues Budget	2025 Interfund Transfers In	2025 Interfund Transfers Out	2025 Appropriations Budget
001	General Fund	\$ 2,541,880			\$ 2,779,862
005	Surplus Fund	\$ 2,000		\$ 50,000	
050	Pt. Ruston Development				
101	Street Fund	\$ 774,400			\$ 772,455
105	Street Reserve Fund				
110	Winnifred Street Fund				
130	Affordable Housing	\$ 60,000			
301	Capital Construction Fund	\$ 75,000			\$ 24,000
401	Electric Utility Fund	\$ 1,368,300		\$ 75,000	\$ 1,224,061
402	Electric Utility Reserve Fund		\$ 75,000		\$ 90,000
403	Sewer Utility Fund	\$ 783,500		\$ 182,000	\$ 608,637
404	Sewer Utility Reserve Fund				
407	Storm Sewer Fund	\$ 102,500			\$ 94,344
410	Sewer Debt Service Fund		\$ 182,000		\$ 181,215
411	Electric Meter Deposit Fund	\$ 18,000			\$ 12,000
622	W.R. Rust Playfield Fund	\$ 13,000			\$ 10,720
624	School Building Fund	\$ 132,000	\$ 50,000		\$ 177,976
		\$ 5,870,580	\$ 307,000	\$ 307,000	\$ 5,975,270

The 2025 Budget Ordinance will establish the appropriations necessary to authorize expenditures for each of the City's funds. This information will be detailed in Ordinance #1587.

Councilmember Jensen expressed gratitude to the Mayor for providing additional details on the budget. She highlighted the inclusion of pay raises for staff, the police department, and the fire department in the FY2025 budget, emphasizing their importance in retaining and attracting personnel. Councilmember Jensen also readdressed the need for a pay raise for the position of Mayor, not necessarily for Mayor Hopkins, but for the position itself. She stated that this adjustment would help attract qualified candidates, particularly if the City transitions to a City Manager form of government. Additionally, she noted the necessity of increasing compensation to keep pace with the cost of living and ensure parity with other positions across the state.

Councilmember Holland shared that he had compared the FY2024 and FY2025 budgets and expressed concerns, noting areas that could be improved. He specifically highlighted a 30% increase in a particular line item from FY2024 to FY2025 and inquired about the reasons behind the higher starting amounts for some line items compared to FY2024. Mayor Hopkins requested that Councilmember Holland provide further details on the specific line items he referenced, so the information could be shared with the Council and addressed. Mayor Hopkins also elaborated that public safety is consuming 70% of the City's revenue, and this expense complicates the process of balancing other budgetary needs.

Councilmember Jensen asked for clarification regarding whether the electric and sewer companies maintain themselves. Mayor Hopkins explained that each of these services operates within a separate, siloed account and is not funded by the general fund. He further elaborated on other expenses and situations in regard to the budget.

Councilmember Hedrick inquired about the increase from FY2024, specifically asking how much of it is attributed to the 4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Mayor Hopkins did not provide an exact figure but explained that the increase includes factors such as the addition of new positions and other necessary adjustments.

Councilmember Syler inquired whether any funds are available from the County or the State to assist with the challenges the City is currently facing, including issues related to the EPA, in order to improve the City's situation. Mayor Hopkins explained that while the City has already received grants and other forms of assistance, ongoing challenges such as audits and other setbacks continue to hinder progress. Councilmember Syler inquired if there are any outstanding debts the City can collect to help generate additional revenue. Mayor Hopkins provided further details on the status of ongoing projects, elaborating on their current progress.

Councilmember Hedrick moved to defer further consideration of Ordinance 1587 and further action until the regular Council Meeting on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

CLAIMS/PAYROLL – Councilmember Hendrick moved to approve Claims for November 19, 2024, and Payroll for November 20, 2024, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

MAYOR'S TIME – The Mayor emphasized the resiliency of the City and highlighted potential grants that could support and help complete ongoing projects, such as the undergrounding project. He also shared that the City is solar compatible, should residents wish to install solar panels on their property and other potential projects regarding solar power.

Councilmember Hedrick – Thanked the Mayor for providing an overview of the budget and highlighted the improvements made to the budget over the years. He discussed the sale of the condominium building, which generated revenue for the City, as well as state mandates. He also stated that he would be in contact with the State Legislator regarding the Winnifred project and working with the Department of Ecology.

Councilmember Syler – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Huson – Was excused.

Councilmember Jensen – Thanked the audience for attending the meeting and providing valuable feedback. She emphasized that the City Council is always available via email and, although certain topics may not be listed on the agenda, the Council is actively listening to the community. She also informed attendees that the City's budget is available online for review and encouraged them to share any feedback.


Councilmember Holland – Shared his thoughts on Ordinance 1585, noting the number of individuals attending the Council meeting who oppose the ordinance but have not offered any solutions, including the owners and operators of the establishments. He stated that if a solution does not come from the respective parties, it will need to come from the City Council. He expressed gratitude to those who shared their comments and encouraged further feedback regarding the ordinance, noting that he is open to change. In conclusion, he expressed his support for Ordinance 1585.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 8:13 PM Councilmember Hendrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.



Bruce Hopkins, Mayor

ATTEST:



Mario A. Ortega, Jr., City Clerk



**Chief's Report
Ruston Police Department
Tuesday, November 19, 2024**

**Pre-COVID and Post-COVID Comparison of Police Department
Activities**

A statistical¹ comparison of all pro-active outputs and all calls for service during the years 2018/2017 versus 2024/2023, January through October of each year.

Combined Total	<u>2024/2023</u>	<u>2018/2017</u>	<u>Percent of Change</u>
Traffic Stops ² :	1998	2123	-5.88789% ³
Calls for Service ⁴ :	2803	1559	+79.7947% ⁵

Considerations Affecting Traffic Stop Outputs

Officer Lake was on TDL for 6.5 months in 2024 and 2023

Officer Hansen was on PFMLA for 2.5 month in 2024 and 2023

In 2017, the Ruston Police chief had more traffic stops than all officers combined

All incidents requiring formal case reports or field information reports⁶:

2024: 441 (January through October **only**)

2023: 401 (Entire year)

Percent of Change: +9.07% (will increase with November and December)

¹ NetMenu database at South Sound 911

² Does not include traffic stops which occur just outside of city limits or coded incorrectly by dispatcher

³ Approximately 1.2 less traffic stops per week (125 divided into 104 weeks)

⁴ Does not include traffic stops

⁵ Approximately 52 more calls for service per month (1244 divided into 24 months)

⁶ Tallied from Enforcer (Record Management Service) / Does not include follow-up or supplemental reports

One of our officers received the Statewide 2024 Best Officer – Small City award from the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission during their annual conference in Wenatchee. This award is for traffic safety excellence and highest reported traffic stops and arrests.

Ruston Fire Department Monthly Review for October 2024

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Presented by Chief Bruce Allen

Total Incidents (YTD) 151, October 16 (3 Fire/Service, 11 Medical Aid)

Volunteer Hours: October 2,330 Hours, YTD 19,207 Hours

Membership Roster (25 out of 25): (22 Members, 3 Officers)

State of the Business

- Halloween was a big success between the Police and Fire Departments.
- Please join us for an old-fashioned Tree Lighting on December 1st at 6pm.
- Ruston Toy and Food Drive starts December 1st, and we will be picking up on December 14th. Your donations can also be dropped at the Fire House between 8-3 Monday to Friday.