

**CITY OF RUSTON  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

**Tuesday, December 3, 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 Huson, Councilmember Jensen, and Councilmember Holland. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the agenda with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

**MINUTES** - Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes for the regular Council Meeting of November 19, 2024, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS –**

**Benjamin Thomas** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, citing concerns about its underlying motivation and the negative impact it will have on the community as a whole.

**Jessica Menser** – Provided examples of how other cities have tackled issues similar to those addressed in Ordinance 1585 and how they could positively impact the community.

**Trevor Barker** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, raising concerns about the allegations within the ordinance, its overall effectiveness, and other issues related to the City. He highlighted a letter the Unicorn received from the City regarding the zoning and the parking lot near the establishment.

**Ford Connor** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, recommended the City should contact and involve the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board as they are the only entity that has control over liquor licenses. Additionally, emphasized the need for proper documentation to address and resolve the current issues

**Laura Liezear** – Expressed concerns about Ordinance 1585, emphasized the need for action to resolve the ongoing issues, and stressed the importance of notifying the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board to effectively address them.

**Ed Ricker** - Tacoma resident, expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585 and referenced his comments from the previous meeting. He proposed forming a focus group with diverse representatives to build relationships and foster a positive impact.

**Bud S.** – Tacoma resident, expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, stating that the rationale, supporting data, and potential risk of litigation do not justify its passage.

**Jim Jackson** - Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, suggesting that the issues should have been discussed among the involved entities instead of escalating to this point, which now seems to be heading toward litigation.

**Seth Golding** – He spoke with the officer liaison from the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board and suggested that the proper approach would be to involve the Board and give establishments the opportunity to correct their practices.

**Christof – Silver Cloud** – Acknowledged the comments from the attendees, shared the impact the passage of Ordinance 1585 would have on the community and his business.

**John Lane** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585 and expressed concern about the impact its passage would have on local businesses and the negative effects it would have on various establishments and events.

**Talia** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, emphasizing the value that establishments provide by bringing people together and fostering community. She noted that passing Ordinance 1585 would have a negative impact on both patrons and businesses.

**Jacob P.** – Expressed opposition to Ordinance 1585, emphasizing that government overreach will not achieve the objectives of the complaints and stressing the need to hold the appropriate individuals accountable.

**Andy Dunn** – She noted that the number of speeding vehicles is higher earlier in the day compared to later. Additionally, she stated that Ordinance 1585 would limit the time individuals can socialize and decrease revenue for local establishments.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** – At 7:39 p.m., Mayor Hopkins convened to an executive session for 58 minutes until 8:37 p.m., per RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency matters relating to agency enforcement actions, or to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency litigation or potential litigation to which the agency, the governing body, or a member acting in an official capacity is, or is likely to become, a party, when public knowledge regarding the discussion is likely to result in an adverse legal or financial consequence to the agency. Mayor Hopkins reconvened the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

## **BUSINESS –**

**ORD 1585 – Amending RMC 9.02.010 Hours of Liquor Sales – (3<sup>rd</sup> reading)** - The City of Ruston has experienced increased incidents and community reports related to public intoxication, leading to disruptions of the peace, offenses including public urination and fighting, damage to personal property, littering, and driving under the influence. In order to curb the occurrences of public intoxication, the City wishes to adjust the hours of operation for licensed establishments selling alcohol for on-premises consumption, and limit the hours of liquor sales in general,

citywide. Decreasing the hours of availability of liquor will decrease the impact of public intoxication on the larger community, leading to increased quiet and safety throughout the City.

This Ordinance authorizes the City to limit the hours of liquor sales from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on all days, across all establishments in the City that possess a license to sell liquor, beer, or wine. The Ordinance also establishes operating hours between 6:00 a.m. to 1 a.m. for all establishments (or portions thereof) that serve alcohol for on-premises consumption.

**Changes to this Ordinance since First Reading.** Per the Council discussion at the October 1<sup>st</sup> Council meeting, the draft legislation has been modified as set forth below.

1. *Sales Hours.* Liquor sales hours set in subsection “a” have been changed to allow earlier service. If adopted, these hours would be 6 AM to Midnight daily. In addition, it was clarified that these hours also apply to on-premise consumption of liquor.
2. *Open Hours.* The “open hours” in subsection “b” have been changed to recognize that some establishments may have areas where liquor is not necessarily consumed and therefore, the ordinance only requires the areas where liquor is consumed to be closed.
3. *Special Exceptions.* The last sentence of subsection “b” which allows the Council to pass resolutions to extend closing times when the next day is legal holiday has been stricken as redundant due to the fact that the hours as proposed are now consistent without regard to weekends or holidays.
4. *Sunset Clause.* A Sunset Clause terminating the new legislation on November 16, 2025 has been added at Section 3. If the Council does not want to automatically sunset the legislation, a motion to adopt the ordinance with Section 3 stricken would be appropriate.
5. *Review Clause.* A clause directing the City Clerk to bring this issue back to Council next October has been added at Section 4. This will allow the Council to discuss how this legislation is working and give direction to staff with any requested changes or if the Council wants to extend the legislation beyond the Sunset Date.

Councilmember Syler thanked everyone for their feedback over the past couple of months regarding Ordinance 1585. She addressed a comment suggesting that all Councilmembers share the same opinions, clarifying that each member has their own views and listens to the concerns of the community. She discussed several significant incidents that occurred during the creation of Ordinance 1585, noting that the ordinance would not address the core issue. Instead of the ordinance, she suggested that businesses responsible for the problems should be penalized. She emphasized the importance of documenting incidents and working with both the Ruston Police Department and the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board. She suggested there are other ways to address the issues at hand.

Councilmember Syler stated that, based on community feedback, she will vote against Ordinance 1585 and would like to explore alternative solutions. She proposed that the ordinance be revisited by the City Council in one year. Lastly, she noted the large number of comments urging businesses to report incidents to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board and cautioned businesses to take action to prevent future problems.

Councilmember Jensen stated that the City Council is approaching the issue in the wrong order. She expressed a desire to sunset Ordinance 1585 and reschedule it for November of next year, while exploring the option of working with the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board. Although she supported the aspects of the ordinance related to safety and noise reduction, she pointed out that complaints have persisted throughout the discussion of Ordinance 1585. She acknowledged the validity of residents' complaints, emphasizing that while the evidence is clear, it has not been properly documented.

Councilmember Jensen stated she would vote against Ordinance 1585 because she believes the current approach is misguided. She stressed the need for an established pattern of records and documentation with the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board moving forward. She recommended that the ordinance be revisited in November of next year. Additionally, she addressed 24-hour businesses, noting that Ordinance 1585 would only affect liquor sales, not the overall hours of operation.

Councilmember Hedrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation for the amendments made to Ordinance 1585, noting that it is now a better bill than it was originally. However, he expressed concern that the ordinance does not align with the broader goals of the community. He clarified that the revenue generated by establishments does not cover the costs of police coverage. Regarding the budget, he encouraged individuals with questions to approach him for further discussion.

While he expressed dissatisfaction with Ordinance 1585 and called for more discussion, he acknowledged that the issues it addresses do need attention. He emphasized the importance of the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board stepping up to help address issues.

Councilmember Holland expressed being pleasantly surprised when one business owner and operator approached him to discuss building a relationship and finding solutions. He also highlighted a resident who had suggested several solutions, though they were not viable. He encouraged business owners and operators to actively seek solutions.

Although he did not want to support Ordinance 1585, he acknowledged that the high level of interest in the matter was due to the City Council's decision to take a stand. He noted the lack of businesses stepping up to police themselves and stated that, despite his reservations, he felt compelled to support the ordinance in the hope that businesses would come together to find and implement solutions. He emphasized the importance of businesses taking responsibility for their

actions, as residents deserve peace and quiet. He urged businesses to address their patrons to prevent further issues.

Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Ordinance 1585, with a second from Councilmember Huson, passed 3-2.

**ORD 1587 – Budget FY2025 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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 second and final public hearing on the budget was held on November 19, 2024. 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:	November 5, 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, 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
		<b>\$ 5,870,580</b>	<b>\$ 307,000</b>	<b>\$ 307,000</b>	<b>\$ 5,975,270</b>

Mayor Hopkins discussed adjustments to the FY2025 budget, specifically addressing salary changes for the Ruston Police Chief and Ruston Fire Chief. Additionally, he provided further details on budget line items related to the Ruston Police Department.

Councilmember Jensen emphasized the importance of passing the FY2025 Budget and continuing to explore other revenue sources in the coming year.

Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Ordinance 1587 with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

**CLAIMS/PAYROLL** – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Claims for December 3, 2024, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

**MAYOR'S TIME** – Mayor Hopkins addressed a concern regarding the security cameras. He provided information regarding composting services that are provided by Murrey's Disposal and to be included in the upcoming newsletter. He did express concern regarding the status of the EPA grant request due to the change of leadership in Washington. He provided some updates regarding Point Ruston.

**Councilmember Hedrick** – He stated that the FY2025 Budget is becoming increasingly tight, and we will need to be more strategic with expenses throughout the year. He acknowledged the Mayor's efforts regarding the budget and highlighted the passage of Ordinance 1585, with the intention of reviewing it again in the future.

**Councilmember Syler** – Nothing at this time.

**Councilmember Huson** – Nothing at this time.

**Councilmember Jensen** – Ordinance 1585. While expressing her dislike for the ordinance, she acknowledged that it was a difficult decision. She emphasized the importance of reporting and documenting incidents, as Ordinance 1585 is scheduled for review in November of next year. She expressed her desire to revisit the issue and continue collaborating with residents to resolve the concerns. Lastly, she announced the upcoming tree lighting ceremony on Saturday, December 7, 2024. She thanked Mark Shingledecker for his efforts in decorating the tree and the city. She encouraged everyone to join in the celebration and called for volunteers to assist with the event.

**Councilmember Holland** – Nothing at this time.

**MEETING AJOURNED** – At 9:05 PM Councilmember Hedrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

  
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Bruce Hopkins, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Mario A. Ortega, Jr., City Clerk