

CITY OF RUSTON REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 2, 2025

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – At 7:02 PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular City Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Hedrick, Councilmember Syler, Councilmember Huson, Councilmember Jensen, and Councilmember Holland. Following the flag salute, 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 City Council Meeting of August 19, 2025, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

PRESENTATIONS:

Speaker of the House, Laurie Jenkins and Representative Jake Fey presented the 2025 Legislative Session Update. *The presentation is attached for reference.*

Councilmember Hedrick thanked Speaker Jenkins and Representative Fey for their presentation and expressed appreciation for their continued support. He acknowledged their efforts related to law enforcement, density, and housing. Councilmember Hedrick inquired about infill and recent new construction, noting that such development is welcomed in the City of Ruston. He stated that the City has supported increased density and the addition of ADUs but questioned whether the Legislature has reached its peak on density policies, given the pushback from other municipalities regarding the Growth Management Act.

Speaker Jenkins responded that several bills addressing this issue have been passed in recent years, though it is uncertain whether additional legislation will be introduced. She also provided further details on the impacts of the reconciliation bill on Washington State, including future federal funding, legislative implementations, and considerations to assist municipalities.

Representative Fey provided clarification, noting that additional work is underway in several areas, including housing, transit, infrastructure, and sewer and water improvements to support future development.

Councilmember Jensen expressed appreciation for the attendance of Speaker Jenkins and Representative Fey, as well as for the information provided in their presentation. She highlighted the discussion regarding trooper retention and salaries, noting that these issues, along with fire department salaries, are an important consideration in the City's budget as it works to maintain competitive compensation.

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

Councilmember Jensen further noted that the City has experienced an influx of visitors and traffic during the summer months. She emphasized the need for support in addressing transportation and traffic challenges, including expanded bus routes and potential transportation-related requirements for developers. Representative Fey acknowledged the complexity of navigating through Point Ruston and shared additional information on the Legislature's commitment to supporting local transit, with the goals of improving accessibility, expanding routes in rural areas, and alleviating traffic issues faced by municipalities.

Speaker Jenkins added that HB 2015, which defines community safety grants, is broad in scope and not limited to law enforcement officers. She explained that the grants allow local communities to determine the best use of funds to improve safety and also include tax authority. Speaker Jenkins further suggested that the City look to the City of George and other small municipalities as examples of how they manage large events and significant visitor influxes, as well as the legislative support they have received to accommodate such events.

Councilmember Holland reflected on the history between the Legislature and the City of Ruston. He referenced the discussion on trooper retention, questioning the statewide problem with attracting and retaining law enforcement staff and suggesting that there may be underlying issues contributing to the loss of personnel.

He also raised concerns about recent events, including a 70% increase related to the Portage Bay contract and a \$31 billion shortfall from Sound Transit, questioning whether these issues stem from poor planning. Councilmember Holland thanked Speaker Jenkins and Representative Fey for their work, noting that while he agrees with some of the Legislature's decisions, he disagrees with others.

He further expressed his view that the incomplete development at Point Ruston is partly attributable to actions taken by the State and the Legislature. He also referenced past annexation efforts and the Interlocal Agreement with Pierce County, concluding his remarks by questioning the number of permits issued by the City of Tacoma.

Representative Fey expressed that he discussed with Councilmember Hedrick regarding the development at Point Ruston. He expressed that he does have regrets about how the events played out and at the time the Legislature was trying to assist the City of Tacoma with their LID responsibilities. He shared from a personal perspective that he hopes the feelings can be moved on and look towards the future and expressed a personal apology.

He clarified the 70% increase noted in the Portage Bay contract was due to contractor shortage and all the intricacies tied to it and lessons learned by the DOT when trying to

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

navigate this contract. He further noted that they are looking at their contract procedures to ensure similar situations do not occur and help streamline the process but also ensure the funding stays at a reasonable amount.

Speaker Jinkins addressed the trooper shortage, noting that Washington has three training centers and that all current classes are full, with no empty seats. She explained that the state has historically had a very low officer-to-population ratio, and that the “boomer effect” has contributed to the shortage. She also observed that workforce shortages are affecting nearly every profession.

She provided metrics on projected revenue growth, noting that the average growth rate since the Great Recession has been 6%, with only one year showing a lower rate. She acknowledged criticism for using this data, explaining that the actual growth rate was 2%, and clarified that Washington is not in a recession, but it reflects as if there is a budget deficit faced by the Legislature. Speaker Jinkins added that the Legislature is working to exercise sound fiscal management to manage reserves and the overall budget effectively.

Mayor Hopkins expressed appreciation to Representative Fey, noting that the City is now working with a promising developer and highlighting the appropriations secured for Ruston. He also expressed satisfaction that these funds facilitated the acquisition of land from Burlington Northern.

The Mayor noted a challenge related to the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) audit. The audit included four findings, two of which involved creating a clean energy implementation plan, despite Ruston not generating its own power but purchasing it from the City of Tacoma. Another finding concerned reporting greenhouse gas emissions, which presents a similar challenge. The Department of Commerce advised Mayor Hopkins to relay these concerns to the Legislature, as they wrote the law. He added that the Department of Commerce will direct questions to Tacoma, raising concerns about how these numbers will be audited for accuracy. Mayor Hopkins also highlighted the financial burden of the audit, which cost nearly \$16,000—an expense not budgeted for in the City’s budget.

Mayor Hopkins further commented on the Middle Housing requirements, including increased density and reduced parking requirements, expressing concern that these changes may create challenges for Ruston. Current issues include traffic congestion and the City Planner managing a large number of unit lot subdivisions, duplexes, and ADUs. He noted that traffic is further impacted by Parks Tacoma activities and expressed hope that planning efforts will proceed smoothly.

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

He also mentioned Pierce Transit's attendance at a previous meeting, noting that ridership metrics were not available, but that usage appears low. Finally, Mayor Hopkins indicated that he may request assistance during future discussions with the EPA regarding the cleanup of a local lot.

Representative Fey expressed support in assisting the Mayor with the requirements of CETA and the associated administrative costs. Speaker Jenkins then invited the City Council to provide suggestions regarding any of the issues discussed during the meeting.

STAFF REPORT – Nothing at this time.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Douglas Hammond – Discussed ongoing issues related to adult mental health, sharing his personal experiences working with individuals and organizations, and emphasized the importance of maintaining funding and facilities for mental health resources.

David Bell – Expressed gratitude to the City's Public Works Department, including Kevin Moser and Mark Shingledecker, for their efforts in maintaining the alley during the ongoing pavement project.

BUSINESS –

ORD 1592 – Business License Update – 2nd Reading

INFORMATION / BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Washington legislature passed a law which, in part, required cities with business licenses and local B&O taxes to develop and adopt a model ordinance for business licensing. Among other requirements, the model ordinance needed to include a minimum threshold exemption to establish when out-of-town businesses were required to be licensed. As a result, businesses whose annual value of gross proceeds of sales, or gross income of the business in the city was equal to or less than \$2,000, and who did not maintain a place of business in the city, were not required to pay a business license fee. In compliance with the state law, Ruston adopted Ordinance 1507 on September 4, 2018, and the minimum threshold exemption became effective January 1, 2019.

In 2024, the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and a workgroup of cities reviewed and updated the minimum threshold exemption. The update would make a

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

one-time increase to a higher threshold to \$4,000 for out-of-city businesses from the current \$2,000 threshold, effective January 1, 2026. Cities may choose to enact a higher threshold above \$4,000 if desired.

In addition to the one-time increase, other changes include:

- Every four years after 2026, the threshold will automatically increase based on cumulative inflation.
- The rates of inflation will be calculated using the Consumer Price Index-U (CPI-U) Western for June of each year compared to the previous year for the previous four years.
- The rate of inflation will be calculated as zero in any year in which inflation is negative and capped at 5% per year or 20% over four years if inflation exceeds these amounts.
- To make the threshold easier to administer, the cumulative inflation amount will be rounded to the nearest \$100.

Deadlines for adoption by cities with business licenses.

Cities with a business license must adopt the updated minimum threshold by January 1, 2026. However, cities that partner with the state's Business Licensing Service (BLS) for business licensing administration have a deadline of October 17, 2025, because the cities must provide 75-day notice to BLS of any changes to their business licenses, including mandatory changes. Therefore, the last Council meeting in which the business license code updates required by the state can be adopted is October 7, 2025. If adopted by September 2, 2025, the City will be ahead of meeting this deadline.

FISCAL CONSIDERATION

The increase in the minimum threshold may result in a loss of some business license fees collected by the City. Businesses grossing between \$2,001 and \$12,000 currently pay \$37 annually for a business license. Any losses resulting from the increase in the exemption threshold should be minimal.

RECOMMENDATION / MOTION

Adopt Ordinance No. 1592.

Councilmember Hedrick inquired on the threshold but stated he will direct his question to the City Attorney.

Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Ordinance 1592, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

RES 814 – Authorizing ILA for Pierce County Court

INFORMATION / BACKGROUND

In 2018, The City of Ruston adopted Resolution #688 and entered into an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Fircrest for the provision of municipal court services beginning January 1, 2019. The initial term of that agreement expired on December 31, 2019, and has automatically renewed per the terms of the agreement. The current term of the agreement expires on December 31, 2025, and will automatically renew unless notice to terminate is provided by October 1, 2025, for the next fiscal year.

The City has recently considered implementing an automated traffic safety camera program, which would result in an increased number of traffic infractions which would require processing by Fircrest. Fircrest has advised the City that it currently does not have capacity to process the anticipated increase in traffic infractions. Therefore, the City began exploring other court options and learned the Pierce County District Court has capacity to accept Ruston's municipal court services and has agreed to work with the City to accommodate any increase in traffic infractions in the event the City implements a traffic safety camera program.

The proposed Interlocal Agreement does not include any additional costs for traffic camera infractions at this time and amendment will be required if a traffic camera program is implemented at a later date. The proposed agreement is for an initial term of four (4) years, beginning January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2029, unless renewed or extended.

FISCAL IMPACT

The current cost of the agreement with Fircrest is \$275,095 for services through December 31, 2025.

The expected annual cost for court services (without any camera infractions) through Pierce County District Court is \$193,600, with an anticipated increase of 4% per year for the initial term as follows:

Calendar Year	Previous Year Base Cost	Cost of Annual Increase (4%)	Annual Base Cost
2026			\$ 193,600

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

2027	\$ 193,600	\$ 7,744	\$ 201,344
2028	\$ 201,344	\$ 8,054	\$ 209,398
2029	\$ 209,398	\$ 8,376	\$ 217,774

In the event the City implements a traffic safety camera program and the number of infractions increases, the City will renegotiate the above amounts to include processing for any additional infractions.

RECOMMENDATION / MOTION

Adopt Resolution #814.

Councilmember Holland requested clarification regarding the \$80,000 in savings listed throughout the report. Mayor Hopkins explained that additional factors need to be accounted for, but the City is currently estimating savings of approximately \$50,000. Councilmember Holland then inquired whether the implementation of the safety cameras would incur additional costs. Mayor Hopkins responded that the cost is expected to be covered by revenue generated from the traffic cameras. He added that Pierce County provided the City with a set figure based on a prior study, which he and Chief Baustista are currently reviewing and discussing with Pierce County to finalize. Councilmember Holland emphasized the importance of conducting due diligence to ensure that the plan does not create a budget deficit for the City.

Councilmember Hedrick moved to adopt Resolution 814, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

CLAIMS/PAYROLL – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the Claims dated September 2, 2025, as well as Payroll dated August 20, 2025, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

MAYOR'S TIME – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Hedrick – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Syler – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Huson – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Jensen – She added further comments regarding the traffic camera plan, referencing traffic offense statistics and requesting Chief Bautista to provide additional details. She emphasized that the cameras are intended not only to generate revenue but also to improve public safety, and she expressed gratitude for the efforts

CITY OF RUSTON
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025

being made in this area. She also suggested that the City explore available funding sources to further support public safety initiatives.

Councilmember Holland – Nothing at this time.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 8:12 PM Councilmember Hedrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 5-0.

Bruce Hopkins, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mario A. Ortega, Jr., City Clerk

2025 Legislative Session Update



The Big Picture

- 105-day session
- Sent 421 bills to the governor's desk: 274 passed with strong bipartisan support, and 164 passed unanimously.
- Passed operating, capital, and transportation budgets.

Housing

- HB 1217 – Rent stabilization provides predictability for renters
- HB 1461 – Expanding housing options around transit hubs
- SB 5184 – Removing minimum parking requirements makes it cheaper to build and gives developers flexibility to meet local needs
- HB 1696 – Expanding the covenant homeownership program to address the impact of housing discrimination
- HB 1858 – Closing a loophole in the document recording fee that benefitted big banks and corporations to fund housing services

Education

- SB 5263 – Increase funding for Special Education and removing the cap on Special Education enrollment
- SB 5192 – Increasing funding for materials, supplies, and operating costs at our K-12 schools
- HB 1296 – Providing a safe and supportive public education system by clarifying parent and student rights
- Maintained funding for school meals and summer EBT for kids

Community Safety

- HB 2015 – Investing in public safety at the local level with \$100 Million in one-time grants for law enforcement and \$110 Million for the community reinvestment program
- HB 1163 – Requiring a Permit to Purchase for purchasing, transferring, or possessing firearms
- HB 1052 – Increasing clarity in hate crime laws
- HB 1232 – Protecting people held at private detention facilities through operational requirements and strengthened oversight

Health Care

- HB 1531 – Requiring local health officials to implement and promote evidence-based measures to prevent spread of disease
- HB 1432 – Improving access to mental health and substance use disorder treatments
- SB 5489 – Requiring a 12-month supply be available for all contraceptive prescriptions, not just refills
- HB 1971 – Requiring health plans that cover hormone replacement therapy cover a 12-month supply

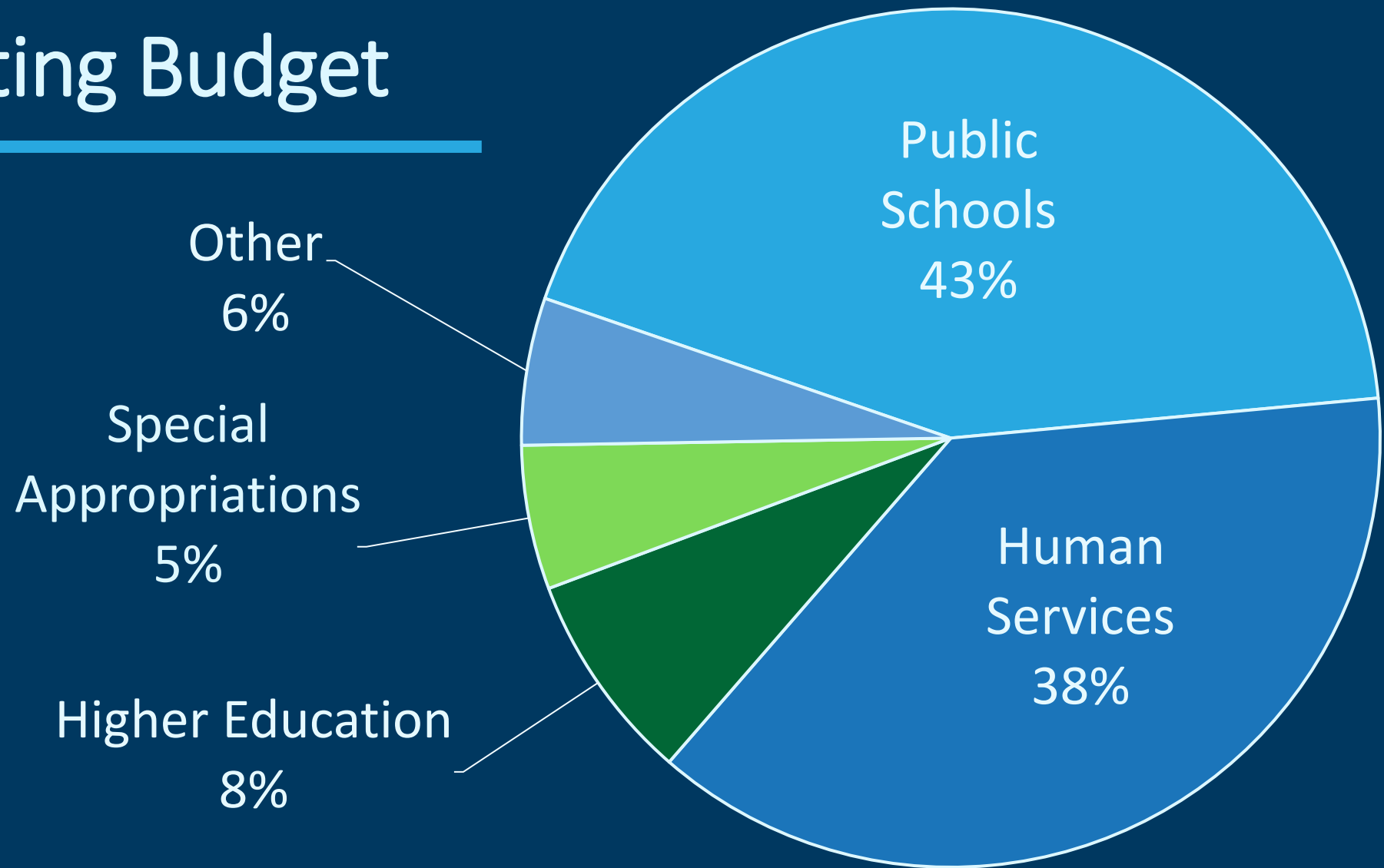
Climate and Environment

- SB 5284 – Reducing waste by making recycling easier and more affordable
- HB 1409 – Improving our Clean Fuels Program
- Protecting the Climate Commitment Act investments supported by voters in 2024
- Maintaining our commitment to fish passage barrier removal in our Transportation Budget
- Investing in salmon hatcheries and steelhead recovery, floodplain safety, and environmental protection in the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget

- Protects funding for food, shelter, and health
- Maintains all food and cash assistance programs
- Makes new investments in K-12 education and housing
- Delays the rollout of some new programs to protect programs that people currently rely on to feed their families or stay housed
- Addresses the budget shortfall with a balanced approach including \$7 Billion in reductions over the next four years

Operating Budget



*Other includes: Other education, governmental operations, natural resources, transportation, and courts/legislature

Transportation Budget

- Supports statewide mobility, infrastructure, and sustainability goals
- Temporarily delays some projects in order to complete high priority construction
- Maintains \$1.1 billion for the removal of obstacles to fish migration
- \$485 million to Fix our Ferries — vessel construction, maintenance, recruiting and training

2025 Transportation Projects Funded – 27th District

Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvements

Pierce Transit High-Capacity Transit Service Expansion

Pierce Transit SR 7 Express Service (Tacoma to Parkland/Spanaway)

I-5 S 38th St to JBLM HOV Improvements

I-5/Port of Tacoma Road Interchange Upgrades

SR 167/SR 509 Puget Sound Gateway Project

I-5 Tacoma HOV Improvements (Nickel/TPA funded)

Tacoma Rail: Alexander Wye & Storage Track Upgrades

Schuster Parkway Trail enhancements

Pierce Transit – Port of Tacoma Service Support

Transportation

- HB 1605 – Washington State Patrol longevity bonus expansion
- HB 1878 – Improving driver safety through education
- HB 1596 – Reducing speed-related crashes and fatalities by requiring speed limiting devices for drivers with a history of excessive speeding or reckless driving

Capital Budget

- Did not have the same deficits that the Operating and Transportation budget faced
- Record-setting \$605 million for the Housing Trust Fund to build more affordable housing across the state
- Nearly \$1 billion for K-12 school construction and early learning facilities
- Reserve set aside to account for rising construction costs and uncertain economic conditions

2025 Capital Budget Project Funding

Organization	Funding
Cora Whitley Family Center	\$485,000
Willard Early Learning Center	\$5,050,000
Asia Pacific Cultural Center	\$1,030,000
Grand Cinema	\$618,000
Integrated Care Clinic	\$1,030,000
MDC Capital Improvement	\$1,236,000
Peck Community Sports Park Expansion	\$1,030,000
Sheffield Trail	\$1,030,000
Tacoma Urban Performing Arts Center	\$1,622,000
Mason Affordable Housing Development	\$309,000
Maritime 253: South Puget Sound Maritime Skills Center	\$5,000,000
UW Tacoma Campus Power Repairs	\$3,900,000

Questions?

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