

CITY OF RUSTON REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – At 7:01 PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular City Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Huson, Councilmember Jensen, and Councilmember Holland. Councilmember Hedrick and Councilmember Syler were excused. Following the flag salute, Councilmember Huson moved to approve the agenda with a second from Councilmember Jensen, passed 3-0.

MINUTES – Councilmember Huson moved to approve the minutes for the regular City Council Meeting of September 2, 2025, with a second from Councilmember Jensen, passed 3-0.

PRESENTATIONS – Nothing at this time.

STAFF REPORT –

Ruston Police Department – Chief Bautista spoke about HB 2015 which allocates 100-million-dollars in grants for safety and law enforcement. He noted, however, that the funds are intended for agencies with COVID-19 response programs, which are crisis response functions the Ruston Police Department does not currently have or likely need. He also expressed the Police Department does not currently have any vacancies and will not have any vacancies until March or July of 2026. With HB 2015's funding only being available for three years, the department will not be eligible to receive money from the grant until a year and half to two years into the grant. He further added that even with City Council authorizing a new full-time employee today, it would take a year to a year-and-a-half to train them, leaving only a year to capture the remaining HB 2015 grant funds.

Addressing the RPD's personnel shortage, Chief Bautista noted that the RPD nearly lost two full-time employees this year and that it was his hope that Officer Sovann would join the RPD in 2026. Chief Bautista expressed disappointment that Officer Savan's plans had changed and that he would not be joining the RPD for personal reasons.

In regard to the 2026 budget, Chief Bautista noted that there were only six budget lines, but that he will provide a letter of justification for every increase. He stated that he is happy to answer any question the City Council has about the budget increases pertaining to vehicles, computers, CJIS update requisite upgrades, and portable radios. Chief Bautista opened the meeting to questions but did not receive any. *The report is attached for reference.*

Ruston Fire Department – Chief Bruce Allen provided the Fire Department metrics for the month including 21 total incidents, of which 6 calls were for fire and 15 were for medical aid. He also announced the new ambulance for the department along with the acquisition of 20 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) bottles, which have a shelf-life of 5 years. He concluded by reporting that one member has been enrolled into the firefighter I certification (FFI) class at Browns Point Fire. Chief Allen opened the meeting to questions but did not receive any. *The report is attached for reference.*

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – Nothing at this time.

BUSINESS – Nothing at this time.

CLAIMS/PAYROLL – Councilmember Huson moved to approve the Claims dated September 16, 2025, as well as Payroll dated September 5, 2025, with a second from Councilmember Jensen, passed 3-0.

MAYOR'S TIME – Mayor Hopkins informed the City Council the court case regarding AURC III LLC, which resulted in Diamond Parking no longer being allowed to charge for parking at Point Ruston. He acknowledged that free parking is good for the businesses there but pointed out that the net result for the City of Ruston is an annual loss of \$400,000 dollars in tax revenue. This money was allocated to the city's general fund which pays for roadways and public safety. Mayor Hopkins stated that another court case is slated for December in which AURC III LLC is suing Point Ruston and the HOA for invalidating its business model. If that court case is decided in AURC's favor, paid parking will be reinstated. Without the revenue from Diamond Parking, the City of Ruston is facing significant cuts in the upcoming budget cycle. Mayor Hopkins noted that he does not currently know where those cuts will come from.

Mayor Hopkins then reported that TerraCotta submitted their site plan review for Lot 15 at the Point Ruston development. From a resident standpoint, he expressed mixed feelings about the development of Lot 15, saying it will affect views and traffic, but from a City standpoint, the revenue will be particularly important for the City's budget. However, while TerraCotta is eager to move ahead with the permitting process, the EPA has not released its liens on the property. Mayor Hopkins stated that he reached out to the director of the EPA and explained the situation in hopes of speeding up the process of EPA releasing the lien on the property.

Additionally, he noted that TerraCotta has offers pending on the rest of the Point Ruston properties, except the OCF, which they do not wish to purchase due to worries about the site being more of a liability than an asset. The EPA also has liens on the OCF. It is the Mayor's understanding that since the EPA does not own property, they will give it to the Department of Ecology. The City will then need to work out a long-term lease with

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the Department of Ecology for a park to be built. He stated that there is no clear path forward in this endeavor and that the City will need to keep checking in with the EPA to move the process along since significant delay could cost the City if the developer walks. However, he does not see that happening if Terracotta buys those other properties.

Mayor Hopkins did state that TerraCotta is asking that Lot 15 have a prominent places designation which will provide them with more building height. He explained that such a request must go to the Planning Commission and before the City Council. To proceed, TerraCotta will have to convince Ruston residents that they deserve such a designation, with distinctive and attractive architectural planning.

Mayor Hopkins informed the City Council that he has an upcoming meeting with Parks Tacoma regarding the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in which he noted that the traffic report was less than stellar. The EIS identified that the crossing of 51st Street and Winnifred Street needs to be signalized. Mayor Hopkins wishes to conduct public surveys regarding traffic and what development might mitigate it. He stated he will work with the Clerk-Treasurer to see if the City can signalize the crossing of 51st Street and Winnifred Street.

Regarding the State appropriations received by the City of Ruston, there is \$1.1 million dollars outstanding, but the City ran into issues with the Department of Ecology when it tried to write the grants required to receive that funding. He stated that grant writing is highly technical and that the State will not reimburse for the actual writing of the grants nor the planning and public outreach that goes into them. He has informed State Legislators of this issue, and they are helping the City write a Four Corner's Letter that may override the State's position on reimbursement.

Mayor Hopkins then referred to having spoken with Councilmember Jensen regarding various grants the City might apply to but stated that the Ecology and EPA grant writing takes precedence. Mayor Hopkins noted, however, that the City did receive funding to conduct a small energy audit on the Ruston School building and the report was far better than the Mayor's expectations.

Mayor Hopkins addressed the City's utilities, stating that the City will be looking into demand metering, a function the City's current metering system is already set up to do. He explained that demand metering will charge a higher rate for power usage at peak hours, incentivizing residents to use power at different times of day. The City of Ruston is already being charged on a demand basis by Tacoma Power and must offset this extra cost that has already been in effect for a year and a half. He hopes to have some indication of what that will look like in the coming month. Lastly, Mayor Hopkins noted that he will be out for the next two meetings.

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Councilmember Huson – Councilmember Huson thanked Councilmember Jensen for the informative League of Women Voters event held at the Wren’s Nest the night before. He expressed that one of the candidates and the write-in candidate did a great job of presenting and answering questions. Lastly, he expressed gratitude to the owners of Wren’s Nest for the utilization of the space for the event.

Councilmember Jensen– Councilmember Jensen thanked Councilmember Huson for his comments. Turning to the budget, she stated that there had been mention of the state allowing the City Council to do a sales tax increase and opined that it would be worth considering as a council motion. Though she dislikes suggesting a tax increase, she believes that a 0.1% tax increase could go towards public safety and offset the \$400,000 deficit in the City’s general fund. She noted that residents and visitors to the City of Tacoma already pay more in sales tax than residents and visitors of the City of Ruston.

Lastly, Councilmember Jensen the next community blood drive is on October 2nd, 2025. She encouraged anyone interested in volunteering to go to the Red Cross website and sign up to donate blood as part of a community event.

Councilmember Holland –Councilmember Holland echoed Councilmember Huson’s sentiments regarding the League of Women Voters event and expressed supporting Wren’s Nest as a local business.

Councilmember Holland then asked what the next steps for the traffic camera initiative are and inquired if the City is waiting for additional information from the vendor. Mayor Hopkins responded that the City must first migrate their court system Pierce County. Once the new court system is implemented, the City will work on an addendum to add traffic cameras and discuss the contract rates for this service.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 7:28 PM Councilmember Huson moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Jensen, passed 3-0.

Bruce Hopkins, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mario A. Ortega, Jr., City Clerk



Chief's Report
Ruston Police Department
Tuesday, September 16, 2025

- Presentation on HB2015
- Update on personnel shortage
- Update on Department's 2026 budget proposal related to vehicles, computers, CJIS update requisite upgrades, portable radios, etc.

Ruston Fire Department Monthly Review for August 2025

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

Presented by Chief Bruce Allen

Total Incident (YTD) 96, August 21(6 Fire/Service, 15 Medical Aid)

Volunteer Hours: August **1563** hours, **YTD 13,877** Hours

Membership Roster (23 out of 25): 20 Members, 3 Officers

State of Business

- Our new Ambulance is now in service, Thank you very much!
- We got 20(new to us) SCBA bottles that will last us another 5 years.
- We have one member in the FFI class at Browns Point Fire