



ROOM A | 130 6TH STREET WEST
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

PHONE (406) 892-4391
FAX (406) 892-4413

**CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
AGENDA
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026
COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL**

FINANCE COMMITTEE – 6:30 P.M

(Barnhart, Piper and Robinson)

The Regular Council Meeting is held in the Council Chambers as well as by virtual meeting. Please contact City Clerk Barb Staalnd no later than 5:00 P.M. on the night of the meeting to obtain ZOOM access by calling (406) 892-4388 or email staalndb@cityofcolumbiafalls.com

REGULAR MEETING – 7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CONSENT AGENDA:

- [1.](#) Approval of Claims - January 20, 2026 - \$94,793.51
- [2.](#) Approval of Payroll Claims - Jan. 16, 2026 - \$133,622.24
- [3.](#) Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - January 5, 2026

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- [4.](#) Council Committee Selections
- [5.](#) Wastewater Capacity Allocation Update

The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is nearing its calculated capacity to meet all requirements for previously committed wastewater capacity allocation and new requirements within current development applications. The City staff is requesting City Council guidance on interim wastewater allocation priorities prior to staff completing review and scheduling of current development applications. City Council should consider the 2025 Housing Study and the Planning Commission's recommendations while developing guidance and priorities.

NEW BUSINESS:

- [6.](#) 2025 Fire Department Recap
- [7.](#) 2025 Police Department Recap
- [8.](#) Police Department Incident Review

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

- [9.](#) Resolution 1958 - Railroad Field Park Land Transfer to Northwest Montana Community Land Trust

Resolution authorizing the land transfer of Railroad Field Park to the Northwest Montana Community Land Trust to facilitate the development of deed-restricted, owner-occupied affordable homes to be constructed by Habitat for Humanity.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- [10.](#) City Manager's Report

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

MISCELLANEOUS

- [11.](#) Police Department -- December 2025 Activity Report
- [12.](#) Fire Department - December 2025 Activity Reports

ADJOURN

Next Scheduled Meetings:

City Council/Planning Commission Workshop - **Monday, January 26, 2026** - 6:00 PM

Study Commission - **Wednesday, January 28, 2026** - 5:00 PM

City Council – Regular Meeting, **Monday, February 2, 2026**– 7:00 PM

Planning Commission Meeting – **Thursday, February 12, 2026** - 6:00 PM

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CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
Claim Approval List
For the Accounting Period: 1/26

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* ... Over spent expenditure

Claim/	Check	Vendor #/Name/ Invoice #/Inv Date/Description	Document \$/ Line \$	Disc \$	PO #	Fund Org Acct	Object	Proj	Cash Account
48403		999999 BOMADS FOOD TRUCK	43.09						
		Refund of overpayment Resort Tax from 1st Qtr							
	01142026	01/14/26 RT-BOMADS RESORT TAX REFUND	43.09			2100 315120			101000
		REFUND OVER PMT FROM 9-25							
		Total for Vendor:	43.09						
48391		184 CENEX HARVEST STATES COOP	1,411.32						
	503002639	12/01/25 FD-GAS BULK	1,411.32			1000 420400	344		101000
		Total for Vendor:	1,411.32						
48383		1145 CITY OF WHITEFISH BUILDING	15,273.05						
		Permits issued for NOV 2025							
	120925	12/09/25 BUILDING PERMITS 12/25	14,450.80			2394 420500	398		101000
	120925	12/09/25 PLUMBING PERMITS 12/25	494.00			2394 420500	398		101000
	120925	12/09/25 ELECTRICAL PERMITS 12/25	328.25			2394 420500	398		101000
		Total for Vendor:	15,273.05						
48359		3173 CIVICPLUS, LLC	3,935.93						
	359722	03/01/26 IT-MUNICODE SFTWRE LIC RENEW	3,935.93			1000 410580	355		101000
		Total for Vendor:	3,935.93						
48392		255 COLUMBIA FALLS CHAMBER OF	16.00						
	02400	01/12/26 ADMIN-CHAMBER LEARNING @ LUNCH	16.00			1000 410400	380		101000
		Total for Vendor:	16.00						
48351		1679 COMMERCIAL MACHINE SERVICES INC.	870.00						
	59347	01/05/26 SWR-MACHINED DRAWING / PLATE	870.00			5310 430600	240		101000
		Total for Vendor:	870.00						
48397		2501 ENCOMPASS SUPPLY	191.38						
	115415	01/12/26 FAC-TRASH LINERS / TOWELS / TP	191.38			1000 411200	224		101000
		Total for Vendor:	191.38						

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48361	E	1879 EVERGREEN WASTE CONNECTIONS	547.00						
	5159612	01/01/26 FAC-12/1/25-12/31/25	99.23			1000 411200	340		101000
	5159614	01/01/26 STRS-12/1/25-12/31/25	199.80			2500 430200	340		101000
	5159512	01/01/26 WTR-12/1/25-12/31/25	99.23			5210 430500	340		101000
	5159511	01/01/26 SWR-12/1/25-12/31/25	82.60			5310 430600	340		101000
	5159510	01/01/26 PRKS-12/1/25-12/31/25	66.14			1000 460400	340		101000
		Total for Vendor:	547.00						
48398		1383 FASTENAL COMPANY	17.98						
	292257	12/30/25 SWR-BOLTS / NUTS	17.98			5310 430600	240		101000
		Total for Vendor:	17.98						
48386		438 FERGUSON WATERWORKS	1,201.88						
	0944236	01/06/26 WTR-METER GASKETS	10.08			5210 430500	230		101000
	0946175	01/06/26 WTR-DUAL CHECKS	1,191.80			5210 430500	230		101000
		Total for Vendor:	1,201.88						
48362		3104 FIRST CALL COMPUTER SOLUTIONS,	2,025.21						
	110073	12/31/25 FIN-MONTHLY BILING DEC	225.21			1000 410580	355		101000
	109701	01/01/26 FIN-MONTHLY BILLING JAN	1,800.00			1000 410580	355		101000
		Total for Vendor:	2,025.21						
48360		663 FLATHEAD COUNTY SOLID WASTE	3,111.23						
		12/02-12/30/25							
	20054	12/31/25 SWR-SLUDGE WST 12/02-12/30/25	3,111.23			5310 430600	395		101000
		Total for Vendor:	3,111.23						
48352		24 FLATHEAD COUNTY TREASURER	726.75						
		FOR THE MONTH OF DEC							
	010526	01/05/26 CRT-TECH SURCHARGE	323.00			1000 212201			101000
	010526	01/05/26 CRT-LAW SURCHARGE	403.75			1000 212201			101000
		Total for Vendor:	726.75						

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48354		21 FLATHEAD ELECTRIC COOP INC	14,709.44						
	123125	12/31/25 FAC-11/25/25-12/25/25	449.89			1000 411200	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 PD-11/25/25-12/25/25	46.38			1000 420100	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 FD-11/25/25-12/25/25	480.42			1000 420400	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 PRKS-11/25/25-12/25/25	431.96			1000 460400	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 POOL11/25/25-12/25/25	59.54			1000 460445	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 LIGHTING-11/25/25-12/25/25	2,581.24			2400 430200	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 STRS-11/25/25-12/25/25	207.58			2500 430200	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 WTR-11/25/25-12/25/25	4,471.52			5210 430500	341		101000
	123125	12/31/25 SWR-11/25/25-12/25/25	5,980.91			5310 430600	341		101000
		Total for Vendor:	14,709.44						
48357		3075 FLATHEAD OIL	163.95						
	26-12332	01/05/26 SWR- 5/1 PHILLIPS 66 EXTRA O	163.95			5310 430600	231		101000
		Total for Vendor:	163.95						
48385		2870 FORT HARRISON INN	848.00						
	55926	10/12/25 PD-LODGING J.FIELDS	265.00			1000 420100	380		101000
	55927	10/12/25 PD-LODGING A.DOYLE	265.00			1000 420100	380		101000
	56821	11/30/25 PD-LODGING T.HALL	159.00			1000 420100	380		101000
	56822	11/30/25 PD-LODGING A.GREEN	159.00			1000 420100	380		101000
		Total for Vendor:	848.00						
48381		2806 HANSON'S HARDWARE	199.41						
	618190	12/05/25 SWR-MISC SREWS	6.60			5310 430600	240		101000
	618314	12/16/25 SWR-MISC SCREWS	6.02			5310 430600	240		101000
	618328	12/17/25 SWR-MISC SCREWS	1.70			5310 430600	240		101000
	618336	12/18/25 WTR-DE ICER	7.98			5210 430500	220		101000
	618343	12/18/25 WTR-MARK PAINT	9.99			5210 430500	220		101000
	618370	12/23/25 STR-NITR GLOVE	30.99			2500 430200	220		101000
	626216	12/31/25 FINANCE CHARGE	6.63			2500 430200	220		101000
	618504	01/10/26 PD-STRAPS / TARP	129.50			1000 420100	220		101000
		Total for Vendor:	199.41						

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48350		1659 HIGH COUNTRY LINEN SUPPLY	299.48						
	0656220	12/29/25 FAC-CITY HALL, PD, CRT, FIN	262.74			1000 411200	224		101000
	0659176	12/29/25 FAC-FIRE HALL	36.74			1000 411200	224		101000
		Total for Vendor:	299.48						
48390		2591 HOTSY OF WESTERN MONTANA	222.00						
	10007	01/12/26 FD-CARBONATE DET 5 GALLON (2)	222.00			1000 420400	220		101000
		Total for Vendor:	222.00						
48374		260 INSTY-PRINTS OF KALISPELL	80.00						
	265971	12/18/25 PD-BC H.REYNOLDS	80.00			1000 420100	210		101000
		Total for Vendor:	80.00						
48399		3305 KENWORTH SALES COMPANY, LIGHT BAR WIRING HARNESS RAM 5500	107.78						
	40475	01/12/26 STR-LIGHTS FOR LOADER	107.78			2500 430200	232		101000
		Total for Vendor:	107.78						
48396		2590 L.N. CURTIS & SONS	615.58						
	1023603	12/24/25 FD-GLOVES	237.21			1000 420400	226		101000
	1025936	01/06/26 FD-MOISTURE BARRIER	237.39			1000 420400	226		101000
	1024316	12/30/25 FD-PATCHES	140.98			1000 420400	226		101000
		Total for Vendor:	615.58						
48358		1080 LES SCHWAB TIRE CENTER	51.99						
	9050065868	01/05/26 SWR-REPAIR 2009 FRD F650	51.99			5310 430600	361		101000
		Total for Vendor:	51.99						
48377		162 LOGAN HEALTH - WHITEFISH	84.00						
	96113603	12/18/25 PD-EVIDENCE	21.00			1000 420100	399		101000
	97039601	12/22/25 PD-EVIDENCE	21.00			1000 420100	399		101000
	99490735	01/01/26 PD-EVIDENCE	21.00			1000 420100	399		101000
	98187373	12/27/25 PD-EVIDENCE	21.00			1000 420100	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	84.00						

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48389		3342 MAVEN, OPS, LLC.	3,000.00						
	1	01/05/26 ADMIN-SOCIAL MEDIA	1,500.00*			1000 410400	399		101000
	1	01/05/26 STEP-SOCIAL MEDIA	1,500.00			2955 420100	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	3,000.00						
48384		282 MONTANA DEPT. OF LABOR &	258.35						
	020126	02/01/26 BCEF-BUILD PERMIT REVENUES	258.35			2394 420500	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	258.35						
48371		43 MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY	345.00						
	2513026	12/15/25 SWR-AMONIA NITRATE NITRATE TK	100.00			5310 430600	394		101000
	2513281	12/17/25 SWR-AMONIA NITRATE NITRATE TK	145.00			5310 430600	394		101000
	2513577	12/14/25 SWR-AMONIA NITRATE NITRATE TK	100.00			5310 430600	394		101000
		Total for Vendor:	345.00						
48387		722 MORRISON-MAIERLE, INC.	8,113.70						
	259033	01/12/26 SIDEWALK & PARKING PHASE 2	3,208.00			2310 470300	931		101000
	259036	01/12/26 SWR-WWTP PER	4,905.70			5310 430600	354		101000
		Total for Vendor:	8,113.70						
48353		3302 MT DRUG TESTING, LLC	40.00						
	0589	12/16/25 WTR-TESTING	40.00			5210 430500	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	40.00						
48393		52 NAPA AUTO PARTS	558.67						
	135231	12/26/25 STR-HYD OIL	21.02			2500 430200	232		101000
	135345	12/29/25 SWR-HEATER / ANTIFREEZE	155.65			5310 430600	232		101000
	135347	12/29/25 SWR-RAINX FOAM	7.99			5310 430600	220		101000
	135365	12/29/25 STR-AIR FILTERS	297.99			2500 430200	232		101000
	135458	12/30/25 STR-FUEL FILTER	38.42			2500 430200	232		101000
	135462	12/30/25 STR-AIR FILTER	37.60			2500 430200	232		101000
		Total for Vendor:	558.67						

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48364		520 NORCO, INC.	30.49						
	45546695	12/31/25 STR-CYLINDR RENT 12/1-12/31/	13.33			2500 430200	220		101000
	45658471	01/14/25 WTR-HARD HAT J.LAMB	17.16			5210 430500	220		101000
		Total for Vendor:	30.49						
48363		2002 NORTHWEST PARTS & EQUIPMENT &	175.92						
	730418	12/31/25 STR-FILTERS	175.92			2500 430200	232		101000
		Total for Vendor:	175.92						
48376		1437 NORTHWESTERN ENERGY	1,901.52						
		NATURAL GAS SERVICE							
	123025	12/30/25 FAC-11/19/25-12/18/25	401.06			1000 411200	344		101000
	123025	12/30/25 PD-11/19/25-12/18/25	90.64			1000 420100	344		101000
	123025	12/30/25 FD-11/19/25-12/18/25	388.98			1000 420400	344		101000
	123025	12/30/25 STRS-11/19/25-12/18/25	208.09			2500 430200	344		101000
	123025	12/30/25 WTR-11/19/25-12/18/25	66.84			5210 430500	344		101000
	123025	12/30/25 SWR-11/19/25-12/18/25	745.91			5310 430600	344		101000
		Total for Vendor:	1,901.52						
48380		2816 O'REILLY AUTO PARTS	54.92						
	147459	01/02/26 PD-CAR # 25 WIPER BLADES	54.92			1000 420100	232		101000
48382		2816 O'REILLY AUTO PARTS	54.92						
	147459	01/02/26 PD-CAR # 25 WIPER BLADES	54.92			1000 420100	232		101000
		Total for Vendor:	109.84						
48400		1888 PLETCH ELECTRIC INC	451.94						
	5925	01/05/26 FAC-ELECTRICAL LABOR & MAT	451.94			1000 411200	366		101000
		Total for Vendor:	451.94						
48379		999999 PORTER, GARY	39.48						
		PD HIT GARY'S MAILBOX							
	010826	01/08/26 PD-MAILBOX REIMBURSE	39.48			1000 420100	220		101000
		Total for Vendor:	39.48						

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48366		3329 PYE-BARKER FIRE & SAFETY	139.52						
	7531330	01/01/26 FAC-ALARM MONITORING	66.27			1000 411200	366		101000
	7530475	01/01/26 FAC-FD ALARM MONITORING	73.25			1000 411200	366		101000
		Total for Vendor:	139.52						
48394		999999 RUIS HOLDING	14,567.00						
		BUILDING PERMIT REFUND 230 HWY 2 E - WFSH AND CF PORTIONS							
		REFUND 01/12/26 BCE-REFUND PERMIT B23-1754 WF	9,468.55			2394 323010			101000
		REFUND 01/12/26 BCE-REFUND PERMIT B23-1754 CF	5,098.45*			2394 420500	390		101000
		Total for Vendor:	14,567.00						
48401		2811 SALTUS TECHNOLOGIES, LLC	3,650.00						
		PERIOD FROM MARCH 1, 2026 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2027							
		2512-39 12/01/25 PD-DIGI TICKET SOFTWARE	3,650.00*			1000 420100	355		101000
		Total for Vendor:	3,650.00						
48369		1042 SANDS SURVEYING, INC.	2,415.00						
		40584 12/26/25 P/Z-ROUTINE SRV 11/19-12/23/25	2,415.00			1000 411000	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	2,415.00						
48378	E	2852 SPECTRUM ENTERPRISE - CHARTER -	324.99						
		AUTO PAY							
		010626 01/06/25 SWR-INTERNET 01/06/26-02/05/26	165.00			5310 430600	345		101000
		010126 01/01/26 PD-INTERNET 01/01/26-01/31/26	159.99			1000 420100	345		101000
		Total for Vendor:	324.99						
48373		3297 Staples, Inc	206.58						
		6051560923 12/30/25 FD-TONER	101.89*			1000 420400	210		101000
		6050854205 12/19/25 FIN-TABS	3.99			1000 410500	210		101000
		6051674255 12/31/25 FIN-COPY PAPER	33.56			1000 410500	210		101000
		6051674255 12/31/25 WTR-COPY PAPER	33.57			5210 430500	210		101000
		6051674255 12/31/25 SWR-COPY PAPER	33.57			5310 430600	210		101000
		Total for Vendor:	206.58						

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48367		862 SUCCESSFUL SIGNS AND AWARDS	136.25						
	13962	01/02/26 L.S.-(2) GOLD NAME PLATES	136.25			1000 410100	220		101000
		Total for Vendor:	136.25						
48365		3280 SUSAN M NICOSIA, CPA, LLC	3,477.50						
	CITY-06	01/04/26 FIN-CONTRACTED HOURS	1,159.16			1000 410500	399		101000
	CITY-06	01/04/26 WTR-CONTRACTED HOURS	1,159.17			5210 430500	399		101000
	CITY-06	01/04/26 SWR-CONTRACTED HOURS	1,159.17			5310 430600	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	3,477.50						
48370		1644 THE CHEMNET CONSORTIUM	245.00						
	131509	12/31/25 STR-R.LAWRENCE TESTING	70.00			2500 430200	399		101000
	131740	01/06/26 ANNUAL RANDOM SELECTION FEE	175.00*			1000 411800	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	245.00						
48395		2699 THE MAIL ROOM, INC	236.99						
		INVOICE #D127546 12/15/25-12/31/25							
	D127546	12/31/25 PD-MAIL 12/15/25 - 12/31/2025	7.37			1000 420100	310		101000
	D127546	12/31/25 FIN-MAIL 12/15/25 - 12/31/202	24.55			1000 410500	310		101000
	D127546	12/31/25 WTR-MAIL 12/15/25 - 12/31/202	42.49			5210 430500	310		101000
	D127546	12/31/25 SWR-MAIL12/15/25 - 12/31/2025	42.49			5310 430600	310		101000
	D127546	12/31/25 CRT-MAIL 12/15/25 - 12/31/202	82.70			1000 410360	310		101000
	D127546	12/31/25 P&Z-MAIL 12/15/25 - 12/31/202	37.39			1000 411000	310		101000
		Total for Vendor:	236.99						
48375		1623 THE UPS STORE #4515	91.39						
	037214	12/30/25 PD-EVIDENCE SHIPPING	14.34			1000 420100	310		101000
	037394	01/05/26 PD-EVIDENCE SHIPPING	14.34			1000 420100	310		101000
	037395	01/05/26 PD-EVIDENCE SHIPPING	14.34			1000 420100	310		101000
	036149	12/05/25 SWR-SHIPPING	19.69			5310 430600	310		101000
	037552	01/10/26 PD-SHIPPING	28.68			1000 420100	310		101000
		Total for Vendor:	91.39						

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48368		3016 TRANSUNION RISK AND ALTERNATIVE	100.00						
	202512	01/01/26 PD-CONTRACT 12/01-12/31/25	100.00			1000 420100	399		101000
		Total for Vendor:	100.00						
48372		3063 UTILITIES UNDERGROUND LOCATION	22.75						
		FEE FOR TICKETS FOR DEC 2025 (13)							
	5125074	12/31/25 WTR-DEC 2025 UDIGS	7.58			5210 430500	318		101000
	5125074	12/31/25 SWR-DEC 2025 UDIGS	7.58			5310 430600	318		101000
	5125074	12/31/25 STR-DEC 2025 UDIGS	7.59			2500 430200	318		101000
		Total for Vendor:	22.75						
48355		1134 VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCATE PROGRAM	296.50						
	DEC 25	01/05/26 CRT-DEC 2025	296.50			2917 410360	356		101000
		Total for Vendor:	296.50						
48356	E	2733 WEX Fleet Universal - Electronic	7,106.68						
		BILL CLOSING DATE 11/30/25							
	109699569	12/31/25 PD-DEC FUEL - TRAINING	119.90			1000 420100	380		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 PD-DEC FUEL	2,675.73			1000 420100	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 FD-DEC FUEL	1,128.12			1000 420400	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 PRK-DEC FUEL	111.24			1000 460400	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 WTR-DEC FUEL	205.26			5210 430500	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 SWR-DEC FUEL	710.27			5310 430600	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 STR-DEC FUEL	2,146.71			2500 430200	231		101000
	109699569	12/31/25 FAC-DEC FUEL	9.45			1000 411200	231		101000
		Total for Vendor:	7,106.68						
		# of Claims	52	Total:	94,793.51	# of Vendors	48		
		Total Electronic Claims	7,978.67						
		Total Non-Electronic Claims	86814.84						

Total for Payroll Checks

	Employee	Employer	Amount
ADDL HOURS (Additional)	0.00		485.94
COMA HOURS (Comp Time Accumulated)	0.75		
COMP HOURS (Comp Time Used)	8.00		268.40
HOL HOURS (Holiday Pay)	303.25		10,364.56
HOLW HOURS (Holiday Worked @ 2.5x)	8.00		281.28
J001 HOURS (CLOTH ALLOW)	0.00		800.00
J003 HOURS (PD HOL WK)	12.00		690.84
J008 HOURS (PD HOL WK OT)	48.00		2,383.02
J011 HOURS (OT COURT)	15.00		669.31
OVER HOURS (Overtime)	72.75		3,758.80
PERS HOURS (Personal Time Used)	16.00		569.60
REG HOURS (Regular Time)	2,484.75		84,919.20
SHFN HOURS (Shift B)	384.00		768.00
SHFQ HOURS (OVT B)	6.00		18.00
SHFU HOURS (Hol wk B)	36.00		180.00
SICK HOURS (Sick Time)	51.43		1,601.31
VACA HOURS (Vacation Time Used)	252.10		10,429.38
VOLN HOURS (Not in use)	29.00		1,450.00
GROSS PAY	118,187.64	0.00	
NET PAY	84,003.22	0.00	
NET PAY (CHECKS)	337.80		
NET PAY (DIRECT DEPOSIT)	83,665.42		
AFLAC-POSTTAX	86.97	0.00	
AFLAC-PRETAX	219.10	0.00	
CITY OF COLUMBI	20.00	0.00	
FIT	9,238.10	0.00	
FLEX ALLEGIANCE	813.83	27.50	
FOP	495.00	0.00	
GARNISHMENT	527.67	0.00	
HEALTHINS/PRE	4,260.10	33,219.40	
MEDICARE	1,666.88	1,666.88	
MT ST FIRE ASSO	115.20	0.00	
MUTUAL OF OMAHA	286.90	0.00	
NATIONWIDE/CITY	0.00	2,063.00	
NATIONWIDE/EMP	200.00	0.00	
P.E.R.S.	4,426.45	5,082.01	
PERS RETIREE	0.00	18.14	
PERS/FURS	1,232.67	1,654.30	
PERS/POLICE	3,174.37	5,082.52	
SIT	3,340.00	0.00	
SOCIAL SECURITY	3,810.18	3,810.18	
TEAMSTERS DUES	271.00	0.00	
UNEMPL. INSUR.	0.00	636.82	
WORKERS' COMP	0.00	3,702.43	
CHARLES SCHWAB	1,940.33	0.00	
FIRST INTERSTAT	1,246.36	0.00	
FREEDOM BANK	3,794.58	0.00	
GLACIER BANK KA	7,811.38	0.00	

Payroll
Jan 16, 2026
\$133,022.24
R. Staaland

01/15/26
12:06:35

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
Payroll Summary For Payrolls from 01/16/26 to 01/16/26

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GLACIER BANK MS	3,222.30	0.00
GLACIER BANK/CF	24,028.97	0.00
GLACIER BANK/WF	2,323.34	0.00
MORGAN STANLEY	4,471.94	0.00
NAVY FEDERAL CR	2,160.82	0.00
PARKSIDE CR U	12,059.94	0.00
STOCKMAN BANK	1,504.68	0.00
USAA FEDERAL	1,514.31	0.00
WELLS FARGO	2,725.65	0.00
WELLS FARGO, TX	2,409.94	0.00
WELLS VIRGINIA	2,121.34	0.00
WFISH CR UNION	10,329.54	0.00
FIT/SIT BASE	103,861.12	0.00
MEDICARE BASE	114,957.61	0.00
PERS BASE	103,022.09	0.00
SOC SEC BASE	61,454.49	0.00
UN BASE	115,787.64	0.00
WC BASE	116,336.98	0.00

Total 56,963.18
 Total Payroll Expense (Gross Pay + Employer Contributions): 175,150.82
 *** PAYROLL REGISTER + VOLUNTEER PAYROLL REGISTER = PAYROLL SUMMARY ***

Check Summary

Payroll Checks Prev. Out.	\$102,510.49
Payroll Checks Issued	\$4,417.81
Payroll Checks Redeemed	\$24,988.46
Payroll Checks Outstanding	\$81,939.84
Electronic Checks	\$129,204.43

Deductions Accrued	Carried Forward From Previous Month	Deduction Checks Issued	Difference	Liab Account
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Social Security	7,620.36	7,620.36		212260
Medicare	3,333.76	3,333.76		212260
P.E.R.S.	9,508.46	9,508.46		212270
Unempl. Insur.	636.82	1,251.25	1,888.07	212210
Workers' Comp	3,702.43	7,234.83	10,937.26	212220
FIT	9,238.10	9,238.10		212260
SIT	3,340.00	3,340.00		212260
AFLAC-PRETAX	219.10	219.10	438.20	212230
NATIONWIDE/EMP	200.00	200.00		212280
Teamsters dues	271.00	271.00	542.00	212310
PERS/Police	8,256.89	8,256.89		212240
GARNISHMENT	527.67	527.67		212330
NATIONWIDE/CITY	2,063.00	2,063.00		212280
AFLAC-POSTTAX	86.97	86.97	173.94	212230
PERS/FURS	2,886.97	2,886.97		212275
MT ST FIRE ASSO	115.20	115.20		212315
HEALTHINS/PRE	37,479.50	73,075.70	110,555.20	212400
CITY OF COLUMBI	20.00	20.00		212450
FLEX ALLEGIANCE	841.33	841.33		212285
POP	495.00	495.00		212335

01/15/26
12:06:35

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
Payroll Summary For Payrolls from 01/16/26 to 01/16/26

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PERS RETIREE	18.14		18.14		212270
MUTUAL OF OMAHA	286.90	573.80		860.70	212400
Total Ded.	91,147.60	82,712.65	49,619.02	124,241.23	

**** Carried Forward column only correct if report run for current period.

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JANUARY 05, 2026**

City Clerk Staalnd administered Oath of Office to - Donald Barnhart, Paula Robinson, Marijke Stob, and Christopher Semok for four-year terms.

REGULAR MEETING – 7:00 P.M.

Mayor Barnhart called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Councilor King, Councilor Piper, Councilor Price, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Semok, Councilor Stob and Mayor Barnhart.

Also Present: City Manager Hanks, City Clerk Staalnd, Police Chief Stephens and City Attorney Breck via zoom.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mayor Barnhart noted amendments to the agenda-adding new hire Tyler Henry in the Police Department and electing a Pro Tempore of the council. Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Councilor Price and the motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Piper made motion to approve the consent agenda, noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried.

Approval of Claims - January 5, 2026 - \$110,668.59

Approval of Payroll Claims - December 19, 2025 - \$204,292.31

Approval of Payroll Claims - December 26, 2025 - \$1,811.26

Approval of Payroll Claims - Jan. 2, 2026 - \$126,470.64

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - December 15, 20225

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Kelly King - Public Works Street Department - 10 years of service
Mayor Barnhart recognized Kelly King for his 10 years of service in the city street department, presenting him with 10 years of service pen and thanking him for his dedicated service.

APPOINTMENTS:

The Columbia Falls Police Department conducted applicant testing for the position of Probationary Police Patrol Officer. Throughout the intensive interview and following background investigation, Tyler Henry stood out and was selected as our newest Police Patrol Officer. Tyler has three years of experience with the Cut Bank Police Department and is a native of Flathead Valley.

City Clerk Staalnd administered Oath of Office to Probationary Patrolman Tyler Henry.

Councilor Robinson made motion to appoint John Piper as Pro Tempore, seconded by Councilor Price and the motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda)

Dave Peterson, 201 4th Ave E., addressed the council to congratulate them and express his excitement about the new council composition, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives, particularly on housing and affordability issues. He also raised concerns about the implementation of a frisbee golf course at River's Edge Park, highlighting safety issues and the potential impact on the park's riparian area. Despite initial reservations, Peterson expressed support for the concept after observing young families enjoying the activity, suggesting a well-managed course could attract more visitors.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Wastewater Capacity Allocation Update - The Wastewater Treatment Plant is nearing its calculated capacity to meet all requirements for previously committed wastewater capacity allocation and new requirements within current development applications. The city staff is requesting Planning Commission and City Council guidance on interim wastewater allocation priorities prior to staff completing review and scheduling of current development applications.

City Manager Hanks provided an update on wastewater treatment capacity, explaining that the plant is approaching its calculated capacity for existing and new development commitments. He clarified that while the facility is near full capacity for nutrient removal processes, there is no risk of regulatory non-compliance or environmental disaster, as the system has adequate hydraulic capacity to handle peak flows. The discussion emphasized that the current capacity calculations are based on a specific population baseline of 1,894 people, with inflow and infiltration from ground flooding being the main cause of peak flow events.

Hanks explained that the current wastewater capacity allocation would not impact single-family homes but would affect large subdivisions and commercial uses with high water volume. He provided charts showing wastewater flow rates and peak events, clarifying that the June 2022 rainfall event was included in the 2023 engineering report and influenced the decision to use the 1894 design flow number, which is currently approved by DEQ. Hanks recommended allocating up to 95% of the wastewater capacity for an additional 1,500 people, leaving 400 people as a safety margin. He also discussed the development applications for Garnier Heights and Lazy Days Court, emphasizing the importance of approving the Meadow Lake Boulevard property to avoid impacting another approved project in the same area.

The council discussed wastewater capacity issues, recommending a moratorium on large annexation developments while planning for future capacity increases. The council addressed infrastructure inflow and infiltration problems.

D.J. Zor, 372 Bedrock Dr., stated that the system is currently at 100% nutrient capacity for DEQ compliance, not hydraulic capacity. He asked what the consequences would be if the City became noncompliant with DEQ or EPA requirements and what the City's plan is to remain in compliance.

He emphasized that his intent is not to inhibit growth or development but to also ensure the City maintains compliance with the operating permit. He was asked whether studies have been done on seasonal peak usage and I & I event, noting increased use from ADUs and short-term rentals during high-demand periods.

City Manager Hanks replied that the City has not violated DEQ permits during high-peak rainfall and high flow events. He noted that the City has not approached levels that would trigger DEQ compliance issues. Hanks acknowledged a clear spike in wastewater flow during the summer season at Meadow Lake, which reflects

seasonal population changes. He explained that projections and calculations vary depending on whether the City uses summer seasonal population or annual averages, which affects the flow numbers.

Shirley Folkwein, 285 Shooting Star Dr. said she has questions on the 4th Ave. W. apartments applications is on the list. Hanks confirmed the apartments are on the provided allocation list.

NEW BUSINESS:

Council Committee Assignments: Initial discussion of Council Committee requirements and assignments and discussion at the scheduled January 20, 2026, Council meeting.

Local Government Study Commission Informational Briefing: City Attorney Breck explained the statutory process governing study commissions and charter amendments. He noted that an amendment to a self-government charter constitutes a change in the form of government under § 7-3-131, and that an alternative plan proposed by a study commission is handled as provided in § 7-3-149. Throughout the statutes, the study commission's role is described as making recommendations.

Section 7-3-149 requires the governing body, the city council, to call an election on a change recommended by the Study Commission. While the council calls the election by resolution, the Study Commission's recommendations are intended to be specific, including the proposed election date.

Sections 7-3-185 and 7-3-186 authorize the Study Commission to examine the municipal government and require it to establish a timetable within 90 days of its first meeting. That timetable must include setting the date for the election on adopting the recommended plan.

The election must comply with Title 13 election requirements, including authorized election dates and the requirement that the election be held at least 85 days after the council's resolution calling it. The City Council may also authorize the election to be conducted by mail. While the council formally calls the election, the statutes provide limited discretion to alter the Study Commission's recommendations.

City Manager Hanks stated that the election would need to be conducted as a polling place election and would cost the City approximately \$10,000. He noted that funding is available to cover the cost.

Councilor Robinson commented that the format of the election would depend on whether the City chose a mail ballot or a polling place election. She noted that the measure would appear on the county's ballot and would not be a separate city ballot. Adding that holding the election during the primary could require two ballots, potentially doubling costs, whereas holding it during the general election would require only one ballot. Robinson further explained that ballots are provided to all registered voters, which increases costs, and that the difference between primary and general election costs is significant.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Piper asked whether sidewalks along Highway 2 had been cleaned, noting improved conditions near Pizza Hut. City Manager Hanks confirmed that crews worked in the area for several days and significantly cleaned it up.

Councilor Piper asked if staff had contacted the disc golf community regarding park etiquette and safety. He expressed support for shared park use and suggested outreach through an association. City Manager Hanks

said he had not contacted them directly but noted they are aware of the concerns and explained that, as with pickleball courts and the skate park, the City remains responsible for enforcement.

Councilor Price inquired about the report on the hillside on 6th St. E. City Manager Hanks stated the hillside report for 6th Street East has not yet been received and is expected in January.

Councilor Price praised Chief Stephens' Facebook outreach, noting increased engagement and improved public connection.

Councilor Stob shared concerns about the disc golf course layout, particularly near water and pedestrian areas, and suggested working with the disc golf association to explore adjustments.

Mayor Barnhart thanked Councilor Robinson for committing to another four-year term. He emphasized the importance of public participation planning and noted updated materials have been published on the City's website. He requested updated council and employee contact information and raised the idea of exploring secure email or alternative communication methods to improve public access while protecting privacy.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Hanks reviewed upcoming meetings and planning activities. He stated that a joint workshop with the Planning Commission and City Council will be held on Monday, January 26, to review survey results and existing conditions for the Land Use Plan. This will be a workshop night, not a regular council meeting.

Hanks noted that supporting documents for the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MALUPA) are available on the City's website, including the 2019 Growth Policy, public participation plan, housing study, and educational materials from the Montana Department of Commerce. He explained that the Land Use Plan and Growth Policy are functionally the same for the City and emphasized that Columbia Falls is updating a relatively recent and well-written policy.

Hanks announced that the City's website will transition to a new platform in early February, allowing greater flexibility, including an option to shield council email addresses through a forwarding system while maintaining public access.

Upcoming dates include a Planning Commission meeting on January 8; the next City Council meeting on Tuesday, January 20, due to the holiday; and a Government Study Commission meeting on January 21 to adopt its final report. On January 20, the Fire Chief and Police Chief will present annual reports and 2026 goals. A mid-year budget update is scheduled for February 16.

Hanks reported ongoing coordination challenges related to county landfill biosolids, with a meeting scheduled for January 14. He also noted that the City is recruiting for a Finance Director, with Roger Elliott serving as interim.

Land Use Planning focus groups will be held on January 21, 28, and 29. Participation will be confidential to encourage open discussion. Capital improvement updates included progress on pool modernization, with a new boiler and three new splash pad features ordered and expected before swim season.

Hanks highlighted training opportunities for elected officials, including live training on January 23, reference materials provided to council members, and an invitation for the Mayor and City Manager to attend the Montana Executive Forum in March.

During closing discussion, the City Attorney advised that emails related to City business, including those sent from personal accounts, should be retained as public records.

The meeting concluded with an opportunity for additional comments under Good of the Order.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Robinson motioned to adjourn at 8:35 p.m., seconded by Councilor King.

Mayor

City Clerk

SECTION 1

**LIST OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES
Members**

Committee

	<u>2026-2027</u>	<u>2024-2025</u>
<u>Public Safety:</u>	1. King 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	King Piper Barnhart Shepard
<u>Public Works:</u>	1. King 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	Shepard Barnhart King Lovering
<u>Parks & Rec:</u>	1. Stob 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	Lovering Robinson Price Piper
<u>Land Use:</u>	1. Stob 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	Lovering Piper Price Barnhart
<u>Legislative:</u>	1. King 2. Stob 3. _____ Alt: _____	Shepard Lovering Robinson Price
<u>Tree Board:</u>	1. Stob 2. _____	Robinson King
<u>Economic Development:</u>	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	Barnhart Lovering Robinson Price
<u>Finance:</u>	1. _____ 2. _____	Mayor Council (Rotation)
<u>Personnel/Salary Negotiations:</u>	1. King 2. _____ 3. _____ Alt: _____	Shepard King Robinson Barnhart
<u>Flathead County Solid Waste Board:</u>	Barnhart	
<u>Flathead County Board of Health:</u>	Barnhart	



COLUMBIA FALLS MONTANA

Item No.5.

Agenda Item Summary

Title: Wastewater System Capacity Allocation

Date: January 15, 2026

Staff Contact: City Manager Hanks

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is nearing its calculated capacity to meet all requirements for previously committed wastewater capacity allocation and new requirements within current development applications. The City staff is requesting City Council guidance on interim wastewater allocation priorities prior to staff completing review and scheduling of current development applications. City Council should **consider the 2025 Housing Study** and the Planning Commission's recommendations while developing guidance and priorities.

- **Schedule:**
 - Jan 5th – Capacity update.
 - Jan 8th – Planning Commission review and discussion.
 - Jan 20th – City Council review, discussion, and guidance for development applications.
- **Baseline Data:**
 - The current WWTP design capacity is 0.71 million gallons per day (MGD) and can support a projected service population of **8,174**.
 - Current estimated WWTP service population is **6,280**, which includes Meadow Lake Water & Sewer District.
 - Remaining WWTP allocation capacity is **1,894** people.
 - Previously approved committed wastewater allocation is **720** people.
 - Current/near-term development applications include **1,380** people.

Wastewater Capacity Allocation Ledger & Current Development Applications

- Current Approved Reserved Allocation: **720 people**
 - 30 people = 12 Townhomes @ 2.5/unit (812 4th Ave W)
 - 50 people = 20 Townhomes @ 2.5/unit (274 Meadowlake Blvd)
 - 255 people = 26 SFH and 76 attached @ 2.5/unit (Garnier Heights – Meadowlake Blvd)
 - *Preliminary plat expires in June 2026*
 - 258 people = 103 SFH @ 2.5/unit (Tamarack Meadows – Meadow Lake Water & Sewer)
 - 160 people = 107 hotel rooms @ 1.5/unit (Lazy Days Court)
 - 20 people = Commercial (Lazy Days Court)
 - (-53 people) = Recovered capacity from Lazy Days Court Trailer Park
- Current/Near-Term Development Applications: **1,380 people**
 - 844 people = 421 units (Teakettle Heights) 240 Apts / 56 Townhomes / 125 SFH
 - 438 people = 175 SFHs @ 2.5/unit (River Highlands)
 - 68 people = 40 apartments @ 1.7/unit (302 Meadowlake Blvd)
 - 30 people = undisclosed multi-family

City Manager Recommendation and Updates

- Allocate up to **95% of Wastewater System's total population capacity** (95% of 8,174)
 - Allocate capacity for up to 1,500 people and reserve 400 people for future projects
- Consider a moratorium for any additional large-scale developments (not on the current list of Current/Near Term applications) while retaining capacity to approve future applications for affordable or deed-restricted housing and/or permitted use in residential and commercial zones.
- The City provided allocation to the two Lazy Days Courts projects. Both projects are permitted use in current CB-2 zoning and the projects are redevelopments of a property that previously had wastewater allocation.

Summary of Jan 8th Planning Commission Recommendations

- Type: Prioritize multi-family housing, townhomes, and attached units. Commissioners acknowledged the necessity of single-family homes in larger multi-family developments.
 - Lowest priority is large-lot or high-cost single-family subdivisions.
- Location: Stated a strong preference for infill development or adjacent to existing infrastructure.
- Reserve Capacity: Preserve a meaningful reserve capacity. One commissioner recommended increasing the City Manager's recommendation for reserve capacity to 600 people.
 - Preserve flexibility for future mixed-use, commercial, and/or innovative housing proposals that are better aligned with long-term community needs.
- Affordable Housing: Explore incentive-based tools.
- Moratorium: Expressed significant concern regarding broad or indefinite restrictions.

Way Ahead

- Ongoing capacity allocation decisions will not impact permitted by-right developments of residential properties within the City.
- City Council should consider the 2025 Housing Study and Planning Commission memo while developing guidance and interim priorities. Considerations could include:
 - Housing type (Single Family, Townhomes, Apartments, Hotels, etc.)
 - Zoning Use
 - Infill development vs. Annexation
 - Construction and Occupancy timeline

**In discussions concerning any specific developments, Council members should limit their discussion to broad deliberation concerning types of housing, locations, and total city allocation & reserve capacity. The Council has not reviewed specific applications, therefore cannot consider all aspects of specific future development applications.*

TO: Columbia Falls City Council
FROM: Planning Commission (via City Staff)
DATE: January 14, 2026
SUBJECT: Planning Commission Policy Direction on Housing and Land Development Under Wastewater Capacity Constraints

I. Purpose of Memorandum

The purpose of this memorandum is to formally transmit to the Columbia Falls City Council the policy-direction guidance developed by the Planning Commission during its January 8, 2026 meeting regarding housing and land development preferences in the context of limited wastewater capacity.

This guidance is advisory in nature and is intended to assist the City Council in near-term allocation decisions and broader growth policy considerations. The Commission did not deliberate on, approve, or deny any specific development applications, nor was any voting performed on the following preferences.

II. Context and Assumptions

The Planning Commission's discussion was informed by staff presentations and accepted the following foundational conditions:

- The City's wastewater treatment plant is currently estimated to support a maximum service population of approximately 8,174 persons, based on the 2023 engineering design.
 - The City's current service population is approximately 6,280, leaving an estimated 1,894 people of remaining capacity.
 - A future engineering reassessment on the wastewater treatment plant, anticipated in Fall 2026, will provide a thorough study of available capacity.
 - The City will continue to support by-right single-family homes, ADUs, and small-scale residential and commercial projects.
-

III. Planning Commission Policy Direction

After public comment and extensive Commission discussion, the Planning Commission reached broad alignment on the following policy preferences:

1. Conservative Allocation and Capacity Reservation

The Commission recommends that the City not allocate the full remaining wastewater capacity in the near term.

- A meaningful reserve of remaining capacity should be retained.

- A Commissioner suggested holding approximately 600 people in reserve capacity
- The purpose of this reserve is to:
 - Preserve flexibility for future mixed-use, commercial, and/or innovative housing proposals that are aligned with long-term community needs

2. Emphasis on Housing Type

Preferred housing characteristics include:

- Multifamily housing, townhomes, and attached products
 - Commission acknowledged the necessity of single-family homes in larger multifamily developments

Lower priority was assigned to:

- Large-lot or high-cost single-family subdivisions

3. Location and Infrastructure Efficiency

The Commission expressed a strong preference for:

- Infill development
- Development adjacent to existing city infrastructure

Caution was expressed toward:

- Isolated annexations
- Exhausting capacity on projects that do not advance workforce housing, economic vitality, or long-term planning objectives
- Limiting future opportunities for commercial or mixed-use development that supports jobs and services

4. Affordable Housing: Incentive-Based Approach

The Commission acknowledged state-law limitations prohibiting mandatory affordability requirements.

However, the Commission supports:

- Exploring incentive-based tools (e.g., density bonuses, reduced parking, dimensional flexibility)
- Inclusion of affordability goals and incentives in future growth policy and development regulations

Affordable housing remains a core value, even where implementation tools are limited.

5. Moratorium: Not Supported

The Commission discussed moratorium but expressed significant concern regarding broad or indefinite restrictions.

If considered at all, any moratorium should be:

- Narrowly tailored
- Temporary
- Clearly tied to infrastructure analysis timelines

IV. Overall Guidance to City Council

The Planning Commission recommends that City Council:

- Preference infill development and development adjacent to City services
- Prioritize multifamily housing, townhomes, and attached products
- Preserve reserve capacity for future development opportunities
- Use remaining capacity strategically while awaiting updated engineering analysis



2025 Fire Department Recap

Call Volume & Incident Overview

- **Total Calls for Service:** 433 (for comparison in 2020 we responded to 305 incidents a 42% increase)
 - **Structure Fires (including mutual aid):** 32
 - **Vehicle Fires:** 9
 - **Motor Vehicle Crashes:** 96
-

Personnel & Staffing

- **8 new volunteer firefighters added in 2025**
 - **Current staffing levels:**
 - 29 volunteer firefighters
 - 4 career staff
-

Training & Service Hours

- **Volunteer Training Hours:** 3,532
 - **Volunteer Incident Response Hours:** 3,892
 - **Total Trackable Volunteer Hours:** 7,424+
 - *Does not include business meetings, committee work, board meetings, or other administrative functions*
-

Officer Coverage & Command Presence

- For more than a decade, the department struggled with consistent response from ranking officers.
- **In 2021:**
 - 15.79% of incidents occurred without a ranking officer on scene.

- **Current performance:**
 - Only 4.85% of incidents occur without a ranking officer present.
 - This improvement is the result of intentional leadership focus and accountability, leading to:
 - Improved incident command
 - Stronger operational oversight
 - Increased consistency and accountability on emergency scenes
-

Firefighters Association Support & Equipment Investments

- The Firefighters Association continues to be a strong and effective partner in supporting department operations and firefighter safety.
 - Through fundraising and responsible financial stewardship, the Association has purchased over \$40,000 in equipment on behalf of the department.
 - Key purchases include:
 - All new battery-powered tools and equipment for the new engine
 - Three complete sets of bunker gear
 - A new thermal imaging camera
 - Training props to support hands-on skill development
 - Pagers and portable radios to improve communication and response capability
 - These investments have:
 - Enhanced firefighter safety and operational effectiveness
 - Reduced the financial burden on the City and Rural Fire District
 - Directly improved readiness, training quality, and emergency response capabilities
-

Key Takeaways

- Overall call volume continues to increase, with more complex incident types.
- Volunteer recruitment and retention are at historic levels.
- Volunteers are making a significant time investment that directly benefits the community.
- Leadership presence on emergency scenes has measurably improved.

- The Firefighter's Association has made a significant financial impact, contributing over \$40,000 in equipment purchases.
 - Association-funded equipment directly enhances firefighter safety, training effectiveness, and emergency response while reducing budgetary pressure on the City and Rural Fire District.
 - Strong collaboration between department leadership, career staff, volunteers, and the Firefighters Association continues to produce measurable operational gains.
-

City and Rural Fire District Partnership

The ongoing partnership between the City and the Rural Fire District has proven to be an effective and fiscally responsible governance model. Through coordinated oversight, shared priorities, and disciplined financial management, this collaboration maximizes taxpayer investment while maintaining a high level of emergency service delivery. The result is a fire department that is operationally strong, financially accountable, and well positioned to meet the community's current and future public safety needs.

Things to come in 2026

Personnel & Staffing Outlook

- Hiring of a 5th career firefighter planned.
- 30th volunteer firefighter to be sworn in next month, fully staffing the roster.
 - Applications already on file, creating a waiting list for the first time in over 20 years.

Firefighter I (FFI) Academy

- The department has hosted a Firefighter I Academy every year since Spring 2022.
- Historically, the academy has been taught by the Montana Fire Services Training School.
- In 2026, the Firefighter I Academy will be taught by CFFD career staff, representing a significant milestone for the department.



COLUMBIA FALLS MONTANA

City Council Agenda Item Summary

Title: 2025 Police Department Report

Date: 1-15-2026

Staff Contact: Chief of Police, Chad Stephens

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY: Report on 2025 statistics, accomplishments, and goals.

BACKGROUND: City Manager Hanks has asked for a briefing of the Police Departments Statistics, Accomplishments, Training and Goals.

ANALYSIS: Department Accomplishments

Implementation of AXON Digital Evidence/ Storage, & Taser 10.

Implementation of a standoff Less Lethal System. (Time, distance, and shielding concepts)

Implementation of DUI Officer / STEP Grant effective October 19th.

Accessed Outside Funding for all new PBTs, (2) LIDARs, Crisis Response Medical Kits, Individual First Aid Kits, & Specialized Breeching equipment.

In process of updating dated IT equipment, specifically transitioning from a desk top based system to a laptop system.

Staffing Update

Currently we have one vacancy which is the backfill for the DUI officer. We are working through the hiring process.

Training Accomplishments

All officers have been through active shooter training except for one of our new hires. Updated active shooter training is scheduled for this coming July and we are working with the school district.

Officers also attended an advanced trauma care class to better treat life threatening injuries as a first responder.

In addition to these trainings, officers attended four separate firearms training sessions throughout the year, four defensive tactics sessions, a special victims investigative update, and specialized training on city policy by the assistant city attorney.

Training hours totals are as follows:

Public Safety Officer Standards & Training Council (POST) Certified Hours **792** hours

In-House Training **244** hours.

Total training hours for 2025 = **1,036** hours

Officers are required to attend 20 hours of training every two years at a minimum to maintain their peace officer certification through POST

Tracked Incidents

12 Uses of Force

6 Pursuits

2 Officer Involved Collisions neither were the fault of the officer

4 Complaints

Awards

Lifesaving awards were awarded to Officers Micah Freisen and Todd Hall for two separate incidents where their quick and appropriate actions directly contributed to the survival of two community members.

Goals for 2026

We have a young but very motivated department. That being said, our focus for the next year will be to continue with what we consider our core trainings curriculum which are not offered as Basic Academy Classes. Maintaining our basic law enforcement skill sets through monthly in-service training and sending officers to advanced trainings for specialization in a specific law enforcement disciplines and leadership training. We will continue to forge ahead with our technology upgrades, and look at process improvement for increased efficiency.

2025 Statistical Information

COLUMBIA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ENFORCEMENT

Total Arrests: **423**
Adults: **371**
Juveniles: **52**
DUis: **123**
Drug Offenses: **36**

TRAFFIC

Traffic Stops: **3,386**
Traffic Offenses: **1,607**
Collisions: **218**
Miles Patrolled: **93,265**

CALLS FOR SERVICE

911 Calls: **3,117**
Police Reports: **10,796**

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS: All accounted for in FY25/26 budget.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: None Necessary

SUGGESTED MOTION: None

ATTACHMENTS: N/A

Vehicle Pursuits

341.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for vehicle pursuits in order to protect the safety of involved officers, the public, and fleeing suspects.

341.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Boxing-in - A low-speed tactic designed to stop a fleeing vehicle by surrounding it with emergency vehicles and then slowing all vehicles to a stop.

Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) - A low-speed tactic designed to apply lateral pressure to the rear quarter panel of a fleeing vehicle, causing it to spin out, stall, and come to a stop (also known as a Precision Immobilization Technique).

Ramming - The deliberate act of impacting a fleeing vehicle with another vehicle to functionally damage or otherwise force the fleeing vehicle to stop.

Roadblock - A tactic designed to stop a fleeing vehicle by intentionally placing an emergency vehicle or other immovable object in the path of the fleeing vehicle.

Tire deflation device - A device designed to be placed on the roadway and puncture the tires of a fleeing vehicle, sometimes referred to as spike strips.

Vehicle pursuit - An attempt by one or more law enforcement officers to apprehend a suspect in a motor vehicle who, having been given a visual and audible signal to stop, fails to yield or uses high-speed driving or other evasive tactics (e.g., driving off a highway, turning suddenly) in an attempt to avoid arrest.

341.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this department to balance the need to apprehend a fleeing suspect with the risks associated with vehicle pursuits.

341.3 INITIATING A PURSUIT

Officers who have received appropriate training are authorized to initiate a vehicle pursuit when the need to apprehend a fleeing suspect clearly outweighs the risks a vehicle pursuit poses for officers and the public.

When balancing the risk of a pursuit with the need to apprehend the suspect, officers shall consider:

- (a) The seriousness of the known or reasonably suspected crime committed by the suspect and the threat to the safety of the public if the suspect remains at large.
- (b) Whether the identity of the suspect is known with enough certainty to enable apprehension at a later time.

Vehicle Pursuits

- (c) The speed of the vehicles relative to the conditions of the area, such as the population density, amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic (e.g., school zones), time of day, and road and weather conditions.
- (d) The pursuing officer's driving capabilities, familiarity with the area, and quality of radio communications with the dispatcher/supervisor.
- (e) The nature of the pursuing unit (e.g., marked vs. unmarked) and its speed and performance capabilities in relation to the fleeing vehicle (e.g., performance motorcycle).
- (f) Whether there are other persons in or on the fleeing vehicle and their relationship to the situation (e.g., passengers, co-offenders, hostages).
- (g) Whether the pursuing unit is carrying passengers other than on-duty police officers. Pursuits should not be undertaken with an arrestee in the pursuit vehicle unless exigent circumstances exist.
- (h) The availability of other resources such as air support or vehicle locator/deactivation technology.

341.4 PURSUIT UNITS

Vehicle pursuits should be limited to three police department emergency vehicles (two pursuit units and the supervisor vehicle). However, an officer or supervisor may request that additional units join a pursuit if, after assessing the factors outlined above, it reasonably appears that the number of officers involved may be insufficient to safely arrest the number of suspects.

341.4.1 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Vehicle pursuits shall only be conducted using authorized police department vehicles that are equipped with emergency lighting and sirens as required by law. Each pursuit unit's emergency lights and sirens should remain activated throughout the unit's participation in the pursuit.

Officers operating vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and siren are prohibited from pursuing a fleeing vehicle or joining a pursuit. Officers in such vehicles may provide support to pursuing units when needed, but should operate the vehicle in compliance with all traffic laws and should discontinue such support immediately upon arrival of a sufficient number of authorized emergency vehicles or any air support.

341.4.2 MOTORCYCLES AND UNMARKED UNITS

When involved in a pursuit, police department motorcycles and unmarked vehicles should be replaced by marked four-wheel emergency vehicles as soon as practicable.

341.4.3 PRIMARY UNIT

The initial pursuing officer should be designated as the primary unit and will be responsible for the conduct of the pursuit unless that unit is unable to remain reasonably close to the suspect's vehicle. The primary responsibility of the officer initiating the pursuit is the apprehension of the suspect without unreasonable danger to themselves or others.

Vehicle Pursuits

As soon as practicable, the primary unit should notify Dispatch of the pursuit, request priority radio traffic, and provide appropriate information including:

- (a) The location, direction of travel, and estimated speed of the pursuit.
- (b) The description of the fleeing vehicle, including the license plate number, if known.
- (c) The reason for the pursuit.
- (d) A description of the fleeing vehicle's evasive driving behavior (e.g., rapid lane changes, no headlights, driving on the wrong side of the road).
- (e) Known or suspected weapons, threat of force, violence, injuries, hostages, or other unusual hazards.
- (f) The suspected number of occupants and their identities or descriptions.
- (g) The weather, road, and traffic conditions.
- (h) The need for any additional resources or equipment.
- (i) The identities of other law enforcement agencies involved in the pursuit.

The primary unit is responsible for broadcasting the progress of the pursuit until a secondary or air unit joins the pursuit. Once an additional unit joins the pursuit, the primary unit should relinquish the responsibility of broadcasting the progress to the secondary or air unit unless circumstances reasonably indicate otherwise.

341.4.4 SECONDARY UNIT

The second officer in the pursuit should be designated as the secondary unit and is responsible for:

- (a) Notifying Dispatch of their entry into the pursuit.
- (b) Broadcasting the progress of the pursuit, updating known or critical information, and providing changes in the pursuit, unless the situation indicates otherwise.
- (c) Identifying the need for and requesting additional resources or equipment as appropriate.
- (d) Serving as backup to the primary unit once the fleeing vehicle has been stopped.

341.4.5 AIR UNITS

When available, air unit assistance should be requested. The air unit should assume responsibility of broadcasting the pursuit once they have established visual contact with the fleeing vehicle. Ground units should maintain operational control and consider whether the continued close proximity and/or involvement in the pursuit is warranted.

The air unit should coordinate the activities of resources on the ground, report progress of the pursuit, and provide pursuing units with details of upcoming traffic congestion, road hazards, or other information pertinent to evaluating whether to continue the pursuit. If ground units are not within visual contact of the fleeing vehicle and the air unit determines that it is unsafe to continue the pursuit, the air unit should recommend termination.

Vehicle Pursuits

341.5 PURSUIT DRIVING

The decision to use specific driving tactics requires consideration of the same factors as initiating a pursuit. In addition, officers involved in the pursuit should adhere to the following:

- (a) Pursuing units should space themselves far enough from other involved vehicles to be able to see and avoid hazards and react safely to maneuvers by the fleeing vehicle.
- (b) Pursuing units should exercise caution and slow down as necessary when proceeding through intersections.
- (c) Pursuing units should not follow a fleeing vehicle driving against traffic (wrong way) and should instead:
 - 1. Request assistance from available air support.
 - 2. Maintain visual contact with the fleeing vehicle by paralleling it on the correct side of the roadway.
 - 3. Request other units to observe exits available to the fleeing vehicle.
- (d) Pursuing units should request that Dispatch notify the Montana Highway Patrol and/or another law enforcement agency if it appears that the pursuit may enter its jurisdiction.
- (e) Pursuing units should not attempt to pass other pursuit units unless the situation indicates otherwise or they are requested to do so. Passing another pursuit unit should only be attempted with a clear understanding of the maneuver.

341.5.1 RULES OF THE ROAD

Officers shall drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property. However, when in pursuit, if there is no unreasonable risk to persons and property, officers may (§ 61-8-107, MCA):

- (a) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- (b) Exceed the speed limit.
- (c) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

341.5.2 OFFICERS NOT INVOLVED IN THE PURSUIT

Officers not directly involved in the pursuit should stay alert to its progress and location and may proceed safely to intersections ahead of the pursuit to warn cross traffic. When clearing intersections along the pursuit path, officers are authorized to use emergency equipment and should attempt to place their vehicles in locations that provide some safety or an escape route in the event of an unintended accident or a suspect intentionally trying to ram the police department vehicle.

Other than clearing intersections along the pursuit path, uninvolved officers should avoid operating under emergency conditions (emergency lights and siren) and should remain in their assigned areas unless directed otherwise by a supervisor.

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When needed, non-pursuing officers and officers who have dropped out of the pursuit should respond to the pursuit termination point in a non-emergency manner, observing the rules of the road. Officers should not parallel the pursuit route.

341.6 SUPERVISORY CONTROL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The field supervisor of the officer initiating the pursuit, or if unavailable, the nearest field supervisor, will be responsible for:

- (a) Immediately notifying the involved units and the dispatcher of supervisory presence and ascertaining all reasonably available information in order to continuously assess the situation and risk factors associated with the pursuit.
- (b) Exercising management and control of the pursuit and, when appropriate, engaging in the pursuit to provide on-scene supervision.
- (c) Confirming that no more pursuing units than required are involved in the pursuit.
- (d) Directing that the pursuit be terminated if, in the supervisor's judgment, continuing the pursuit is not justified under the guidelines of this policy.
- (e) Assessing the emotional state of the officers involved and directing an officer to disengage from the pursuit if it appears they are unable to control their emotions.
- (f) Requesting additional assistance from air support, canines, or other resources, if available and appropriate.
- (g) Verifying that the proper radio channel is being used.
- (h) Confirming the Shift Supervisor has been notified of the pursuit.
- (i) Overseeing the notification and/or coordination of outside agencies if the pursuit leaves or is likely to leave the jurisdiction of this department.
- (j) Continuing the management and control of Columbia Falls Police Department units when a pursuit enters another jurisdiction.
- (k) Preparing documentation of the pursuit and conducting a post-pursuit review, as required.

341.6.1 SHIFT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon becoming aware that a pursuit has been initiated, the Shift Supervisor should monitor and continually assess the situation and ensure the pursuit is conducted within the guidelines and requirements of this policy. The Shift Supervisor has the final responsibility for the coordination, control, and termination of a vehicle pursuit and shall be in overall command.

341.7 DISPATCH

Radio communications during a pursuit should be conducted on the primary channel unless instructed otherwise by a supervisor or dispatcher. If the pursuit leaves the jurisdiction of this department or such is imminent, involved units should, whenever available, switch radio communications to a tactical or emergency channel most accessible by participating agencies. If no supervisor is on duty the senior officer on duty should act in the role of the supervisor.

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341.7.1 DISPATCH RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon notification or becoming aware that a pursuit has been initiated, the dispatcher is responsible for:

- (a) Clearing the radio channel of non-emergency traffic.
- (b) Coordinating pursuit communications of the involved units and personnel.
- (c) Broadcasting pursuit updates as well as other pertinent information as necessary.
- (d) Ensuring that a field supervisor is notified of the pursuit.
- (e) Notifying and coordinating with other involved or affected agencies as practicable.
- (f) Notifying the Shift Supervisor as soon as practicable.
- (g) Assigning an incident number and logging all pursuit activities.

341.8 INTERJURISDICTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Unless entry into another jurisdiction is expected to be brief, the primary unit or supervisor should ensure that notification is provided to each outside jurisdiction into which the pursuit is reasonably expected to enter, regardless of whether such jurisdiction is expected to assist.

341.8.1 ASSUMPTION OF PURSUIT BY ANOTHER AGENCY

When a pursuit enters another agency's jurisdiction, the primary unit or the supervisor should determine whether to request the other agency assume the pursuit, taking into consideration the distance traveled, familiarity with the area, and other pertinent facts.

Once another agency has agreed to assume the pursuit, pursuing units should relinquish control and discontinue participation unless the continued assistance of the Columbia Falls Police Department is requested by the agency assuming the pursuit. Upon relinquishing control of the pursuit, the involved officers may, with supervisory approval, proceed to the termination point in order to provide information and assistance for the arrest of the suspect and reporting of the incident. The supervisor should coordinate such assistance with the assuming agency and obtain any information that is necessary for department reports.

341.8.2 PURSUITS EXTENDING INTO THIS JURISDICTION

Officers from this department should not join a pursuit being conducted by another agency unless specifically requested to do so by that agency and with approval from a supervisor.

When a request is made for this department to assist or take over a pursuit that has entered the jurisdiction of the Columbia Falls Police Department, the Shift Supervisor or supervisor should review the request as soon as practicable, taking into consideration:

- (a) Whether the need to apprehend the fleeing suspect outweighs the risks of the pursuit to officers and the public.
- (b) Whether there is adequate staffing to continue the pursuit.
- (c) The available units' capabilities to maintain the pursuit.
- (d) The number of available units and other resources of the pursuing agency.

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Assistance to a pursuing agency by officers of this department should terminate at the City limits, provided that the pursuing agency has sufficient assistance from other sources. Ongoing participation from this department should continue only until sufficient assistance is present.

In the event that a pursuit from another agency terminates within this jurisdiction, officers should provide appropriate assistance to the pursuing agency such as scene control, inter-agency coordination, completion of supplemental reports, and any other reasonable assistance requested or needed.

341.9 PURSUIT INTERVENTION

Pursuit interventions should only be used when it reasonably appears that using the intervention will contain or prevent the pursuit, and the need to immediately stop the fleeing vehicle outweighs the risks of injury or death to officers and others.

Pursuit interventions may be construed as a use of force, including deadly force, and are subject to the policies guiding such use. Officers should consider the guidelines for the use of force when deciding how, when, where, and if a pursuit intervention should be employed. Refer to the Use of Force Policy for additional guidance.

Whenever practicable, an officer should seek approval from a supervisor before employing any pursuit intervention to stop a fleeing vehicle. Officers should not attempt a pursuit intervention unless they have received the appropriate training for the intervention being used.

341.9.1 TIRE DEFLATION DEVICE

Before deploying a tire deflation device, officers should consider factors such as:

- (a) Speed of the fleeing vehicle - Traveling at high speeds increases the risk the suspect will lose control of the vehicle after driving over or swerving to avoid a tire deflation device.
- (b) Weather and visibility - Tire deflation devices should only be deployed when the location, weather, and other conditions allow the deploying officer to clearly see the fleeing vehicle, pursuit units, and other approaching traffic.
- (c) Cover - Deployment should occur in a location that provides the deploying officer adequate cover and escape from intentional or unintentional exposure to the approaching vehicles.
- (d) Road conditions - Soft or loose material such as dirt or gravel may prevent a tire deflation device from puncturing the vehicle's tire. Deploying the device on loose pavement or icy or wet roads increases the risk of the suspect losing control of the vehicle.
- (e) Characteristics of the deployment area - A tire deflation device should not be deployed in areas that are heavily populated with pedestrians, at times of heavy traffic, or at a location where there is a heightened chance of striking a fixed object.
- (f) Characteristics of the fleeing vehicle - Except in extraordinary circumstances, a tire deflation device should not be used when the fleeing vehicle is a motorcycle or

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other vehicle with fewer than four wheels, an ATV, a vehicle transporting hazardous materials, or a school bus transporting children.

Because of the risks to deploying officers, the intent to deploy a tire deflation device and its location should be clearly communicated to the dispatcher and all involved units.

341.9.2 PIT

A PIT should only be attempted in a vehicle with a reinforced bumper.

Before conducting a PIT, officers should consider factors such as:

- (a) Speed of the fleeing vehicle - Conducting a PIT while traveling at high speeds increases the risk of the suspect or officer losing control of their vehicle. A PIT should not be conducted at speeds greater than the speed at which the officer has received training.
- (b) Road conditions - Because the intention of a PIT is to cause the fleeing vehicle to spin out by reducing the friction between the tires and the roadway, the material of the roadway (e.g., pavement, gravel, dirt) should be considered and a PIT should not be attempted when road conditions are wet or icy.
- (c) Characteristics of the deployment area - A PIT should not be attempted in areas that are heavily populated with pedestrians, at times of heavy traffic, or at a location where there is a heightened chance of striking a fixed object.
- (d) Characteristics of the fleeing vehicle - A PIT should not be used when the pursued vehicle is a motorcycle or other vehicle with fewer than four wheels, an ATV, a vehicle transporting hazardous materials, or a school bus transporting children. The increased risk of rolling over should be evaluated on vehicles with a high center of gravity.
- (e) Number of pursuit units - A PIT should not be used unless there is a sufficient number of pursuit units available to prevent further movement of the fleeing vehicle after spinning out.

341.9.3 BOXING-IN

Boxing-in should only be used when the fleeing vehicle is stopped or traveling at a low speed.

Boxing-in requires the participation of multiple units and therefore must be carefully coordinated with all involved.

341.9.4 RAMMING AND ROADBLOCKS

Ramming and roadblocks shall only be used when deadly force is warranted and all other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted or reasonably appear ineffective.

341.9.5 FIREARMS

Specific guidance on the use of a firearm during a vehicle pursuit is addressed in the Use of Force Policy.

Vehicle Pursuits

341.10 TERMINATING A PURSUIT

The factors considered when initiating a pursuit should be continually re-evaluated by pursuing units during the pursuit, as the circumstances and conditions change, and as new information becomes available. If at any time the risk of continuing the pursuit outweighs the need to immediately apprehend the suspect, the pursuit should be terminated.

In addition, a pursuit should be terminated when:

- (a) A supervisor directs the pursuit to be terminated.
- (b) The location of the fleeing vehicle is no longer known.
- (c) The distance between the pursuing units and the fleeing vehicle is so great that further pursuit would be futile or would continue for an unreasonable time and/or distance.
- (d) The pursuing unit sustains damage or a mechanical failure that makes it unsafe to drive or renders the emergency lighting and sirens partially or completely inoperable and there are no additional units readily available to take over the pursuit.

When a pursuit terminates for any reason, all pursuit units should verbally acknowledge termination, turn off emergency lights and sirens, reduce their speed, and obey all traffic laws. The primary unit should communicate the location of pursuit termination to the dispatcher.

341.10.1 LOSS OF PURSUED VEHICLE

When a pursuit is terminated because the location of the fleeing vehicle is no longer known, the primary unit should broadcast pertinent information for other units to assist in locating the suspect. The primary unit or supervisor will be responsible for coordinating any further search for the pursued vehicle.

341.10.2 APPREHENSION OF SUSPECTS

Officers should exercise proper self-discipline and sound professional judgment at the conclusion of a pursuit and while apprehending the suspect.

Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, an officer other than the primary unit should coordinate efforts to apprehend the suspect following the pursuit.

Any use of force necessary to apprehend the suspect shall be consistent with the Use of Force Policy.

341.11 DEBRIEFING

Participating officers should return to the Department as soon as practical following a pursuit to debrief with a supervisor.

341.12 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Appropriate reports should be completed as required by applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

- (a) Pursuing officers should complete appropriate crime/arrest and pursuit reports.
- (b) The involved supervisor, or if unavailable, the on-duty field supervisor, shall obtain available information and promptly complete appropriate written notification to the

Vehicle Pursuits

Chief of Police or the authorized designee. The notification should briefly summarize the pursuit and include, at a minimum:

1. Date and time of the pursuit.
2. Reason and circumstances surrounding the pursuit (e.g., seriousness of the crime, road and traffic conditions, speed and driving behavior of the fleeing vehicle) that warranted initiation and continuation of the pursuit.
3. Length of pursuit in distance and time, including the starting and termination points.
4. Involved vehicles and officers.
5. Alleged offenses.
6. Whether a suspect was apprehended, as well as the means and methods used.
7. Arrestee information, if applicable.
8. Any injuries and/or medical treatment.
9. Any property or equipment damage.
10. Name of supervisor at the scene or who handled the incident.

After receiving copies of the written notification, reports, and other pertinent information, the Chief of Police or the authorized designee shall conduct or assign a post-pursuit review, as appropriate.

The Chief of Police should direct an annual documented review and analysis of department vehicle pursuits to minimally include policy suitability, policy compliance, and training or equipment needs. The review should not contain the names of officers, suspects, or case numbers.

341.13 PURSUIT TRAINING

The Training Sergeant should ensure that members of this department receive initial and annual training on this policy and vehicle pursuits relevant to their role (e.g., officers, supervisors, air units, dispatchers).

Officer training should address decision-making involved in initiating, continuing, and terminating a pursuit by balancing the need to apprehend the suspect with the risk of a pursuit. Subject to available resources, training on pursuit driving and the deployment of pursuit intervention tactics should include scenario-based training and behind-the-wheel practice, in addition to classroom instruction.



COLUMBIA FALLS MONTANA

City Council Agenda Item Summary

Title: Incident review Pursuit/ Collision CFPD 2026-0000239

Date: 1-12-2026

Staff Contact: Chief of Police, Chad Stephens

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY: Briefing to council about pursuit and subsequent collision.

BACKGROUND: On January 9, 2026 at about 2042 hours, the Flathead County Sheriff's Office took a stolen vehicle report from the area of Hwy 2 and E. Reserve Road. The stolen vehicle, a 1999 Dodge Durango, was last reported driving North on Hwy 2. At approximately 2051 hours, a Columbia Falls PD officer located the stolen Durango driving East on Hwy 2 near 4th Ave. When the officer initially observed the stolen Durango, it was driving recklessly, ran a red light at 4th Ave, weaving through traffic, and speeding at nearly double the posted speed limit of 25 MPH.

Two Columbia Falls PD officers attempted to stop the stolen Durango. After activating their police vehicles emergency lights and sirens, the stolen Durango accelerated and a vehicle pursuit ensued. The stolen Durango continued East on Hwy 2 reaching speeds of between 75-80 MPH. At the intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 206 the stolen Durango struck a 2011 Honda CRV which was turning west onto Hwy 2 from Hwy 206. Both vehicles came to a rest in the intersection.

The driver of the stolen vehicle was taken into custody at the scene. The vehicle that was struck by the stolen Durango was being driven by a juvenile female. The juvenile female had to be extricated from the CRV by Fire Department personnel. She was transported to Logan Health in Kalispell and later transferred to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle WA. The suspect was also transported to Logan Health in Kalispell. He had injuries to his right arm.

The Montana Highway Patrol is conducting the collision investigation. The Flathead County Sheriff's Office is conducting the vehicle theft investigation from the original theft. The Columbia Falls Police Department is investigating the eluding and crimes resulting from the collision. It is suspected that the driver of the stolen vehicle was intoxicated/ impaired.

ANALYSIS: The Columbia Falls Police Department reviews every pursuit we engage in for adherence to policy and MCA. We also examine them for needs in training and equipment. I have reviewed the factors in this pursuit and determined it is within our policy and did not violate any MCA statutes. Factors which we consider are:

- **Reason and circumstances surrounding the pursuit.**
In this case a recklessly driven vehicle matching the description of a freshly stolen vehicle was encountered in the city. There was no identifying suspect information available to officers for later identification of the suspect.
- **Length of the pursuit.**
This pursuit lasted approximately one minute and twenty seconds and went 1.6 miles.
- **Alleged Offense.**
In this incident, officers were aware of the freshly stolen vehicle and its description. Officers observed the vehicle driving recklessly in the City of Columbia Falls (speeding, failing to stop at a red light, and weaving through traffic) and attempted to stop it.
- **Road and traffic conditions.**
The road conditions were somewhat wet with dry patches and light traffic. The pursuit only passed one vehicle coming the opposite direction on Hwy 2 and a few vehicles traveling the same direction. The speeds were between 20 to 25 MPH over the posted speed limit of 55 MPH. It is not unusual for officers to stop speeding vehicles at this rate of speed from time to time in this area.
- **Possible Intervention.**
In this circumstance the pursuit was too short to position an officer in front of it to spike the suspect vehicle and officers did not get close enough to ram or PIT it. (Currently no officers on CFPD are PIT certified).
- **Additional information.**
Officers later calculated that for the suspect to arrive in Columbia Falls when he did from 12 miles away where he originally stole the vehicle from, he would have had to been traveling approximately 90 MPH the entire way. While this was not known to the officers at the time of the pursuit, the information supports the officer's initial observations of reckless driving and indicates the suspects driving behavior may have continued even had the officers terminated the pursuit. Thus, the collision could have still occurred.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: None

SUGGESTED MOTION: None needed.

ATTACHMENTS: CFPD Policy 341



COLUMBIA FALLS MONTANA

Item No.9.

City Council Agenda Item Summary

**Title: Resolution 1958 – Railroad Field Park Land Transfer to Northwest Montana
Community Land Trust**

Date: January 20, 2026

Staff Contact: City Manager Hanks

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY: Resolution authorizing the land transfer of Railroad Field Park to the Northwest Montana Community Land Trust to facilitate the development of deed-restricted, owner-occupied affordable homes to be constructed by Habitat for Humanity in accordance with City of Columbia Falls Resolution No. 1942's conditional approval of the preliminary plat.

BACKGROUND:

- When the land transfer was discussed and the preliminary plat was approved by Resolution 1942, it did not include authorization to transfer the land and authorization for the City Manager to execute all documents necessary to complete the transfer.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Resolution.

SUGGESTED MOTION: I move that the City Council approve Resolution 1958 authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents necessary to transfer City property to Northwest Montana Community Land Trust.

RESOLUTION NO. 1958

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF CITY-OWNED REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT NHN RAILROAD STREET AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE TRANSFER

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Falls (“City”) is the owner of certain real property located at NHN Railroad Street, Columbia Falls, Montana, and more particularly described below; and

WHEREAS, the City holds title to the property in fee simple, as evidenced by the First American Title Insurance Company ALTA Commitment for Title Insurance, File No. 1215902-FT; and

WHEREAS, the property is legally described as follows:

A tract of land in the Southeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County, Montana, more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a point 70 feet north of the northeast corner of Block 113 of the Second Addition to the Town of Columbia Falls, according to the official plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the Clerk and Recorder of said County; thence North, a distance of 250 feet; thence West, a distance of 262 feet; thence South, a distance of 250 feet; thence East, a distance of 262 feet to the point of beginning;

Excepting therefrom that portion conveyed to the State of Montana for road purposes recorded August 16, 1972, in Book 541, Page 298; and

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Falls is committed to expanding the availability of affordable housing for current and future residents, recognizing housing affordability as essential to community stability, workforce retention, and long-term economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the City understands and intends that transfer of the subject property will facilitate the development of deed-restricted, owner-occupied affordable homes to be constructed by Habitat for Humanity in accordance with City of Columbia Falls Resolution No. 1942’s conditional approval of the preliminary plat; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that the transfer of this property to Northwest Montana Community Land Trust, Inc., a Montana nonprofit corporation, serves a valid public purpose and is consistent with the City’s community development objectives; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to authorize the conveyance of the property and to designate the City Manager as the authorized signatory for all documents necessary to complete the transaction.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA, THAT:

1. Property Transfer Authorized.
The City Council hereby authorizes the transfer and conveyance of the City-owned real property located at NHN Railroad Street, as described above, to Northwest Montana Community Land Trust, Inc., subject to existing easements, restrictions, and exceptions of record.
2. Authorization to Execute Documents.
The City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute the deed and all related closing documents, affidavits, certifications, and instruments necessary to complete the transfer.
3. Administrative Authority.
The City Manager and City Clerk are authorized to take all administrative actions necessary to implement this Resolution.
4. Effective Date.
This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA THIS 5TH DAY OF JANUARY 2026, THE COUNCIL VOTING AS FOLLOWS:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

City Clerk

APPROVED BY THE MAYOR OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA THIS 5TH DAY OF JANUARY 2026.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk



City Manager's Report

City Calendar

20 Jan (Tues): City Council Regular Mtg

- Police and Fire Annual Report
- Utility Infrastructure Capacity Allocation

24 Jan: Government Study Commission

- Adopt Final Report

26 Jan: Joint City Council & Planning Commission Workshop

- LUP Survey and Existing Conditions

28 Jan: Government Study Commission

- Craft a revised Final Report

2 Feb: City Council Regular Mtg

- LUP Survey and Existing Conditions

12 Feb: Planning Commission

- MLUPA Workshop – Discuss Data Collection, Research, and Analysis Phase.
- Subdivision and Zoning Regulations
- Short-Term Rentals

17 Feb (Tues): City Council Regular Mtg

- Mid-Year Budget Update
- Fish, Wildlife & Parks Update

18 Feb: Open House Gateway to Glacier Mobility Improvement Project

2 Mar: City Council Regular Mtg

COLUMBIA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ENFORCEMENT

Total Arrests: **423**

Adults: **371**

Juveniles: **52**

DUIs: **123**

Drug Offenses: **36**

TRAFFIC

Traffic Stops: **3,386**

Traffic Offenses: **1,607**

Collisions: **218**

Miles Patrolled: **93,265**

CALLS FOR SERVICE

911 Calls: **3,117**

Police Reports: **10,796**

FIRE DEPARTMENT
COLUMBIA FALLS
MONTANA
2025
433 TOTAL CALLS

2024: 426 Calls | 2023: 391 Calls | 2022: 357 Calls

32 Structure Fires (Includes Mutual Aid)	51 Fire/CO Alarms
2 Chimney Fires	21 Gas Odor Calls
5 Wildland Fires	25 Powerline Emergencies
9 Motor Vehicle Fires	132 Medical
96 Motor Vehicle Accidents	60 Miscellaneous Call Types

City Manager Report

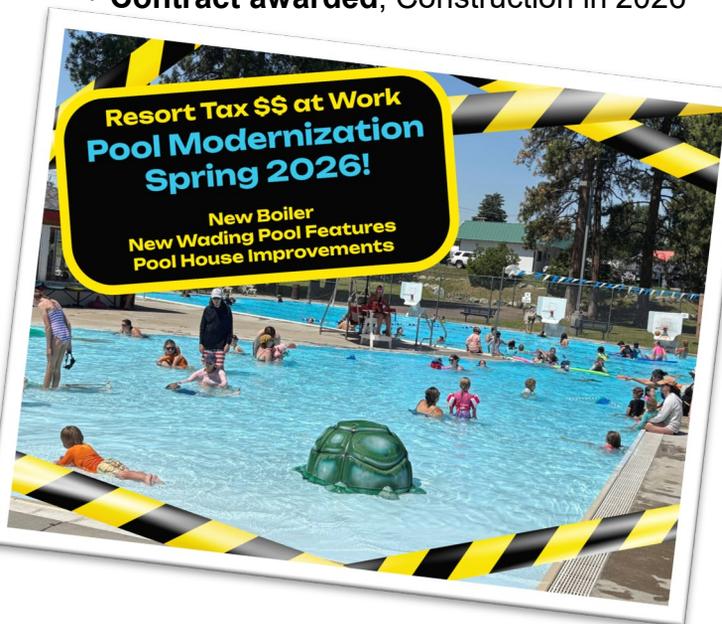
- **Newly Elected Official Training Series**
 - Jan 23 – 9 AM
- **MT Executive Forum (Mayors, CMs)**
 - Mar 4-6 – Livingston
- **Land Use Plan Development –**
 - City’s Planning and Zoning website includes a MLUPA section
 - **Water PER** – Ongoing; City reviewing analysis of current Infrastructure
 - **Sewer PER** – Ongoing; City reviewing analysis of current Infrastructure
 - **Land Use Planning** – Analysis of Existing Conditions. Focus Group Schedule:
 - Jan 21 – Economic Development
 - Jan 28 – Land Use & Housing
 - Jan 29 – Recreation & Natural Resources
 - Interviews - ongoing
 - **Subdivision & Zoning Codes** - Ongoing

Public Engagement Opportunities	
✓ Nov 13	Joint Council & Planning Commission - Land Use Plan Kickoff
✓ Nov 20 Dec-Feb	Open House - Utility Infrastructure Public Meeting 1 Land Use Plan Outreach Round 1 - Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups
✓ Dec 11	Planning Commission – Utility Infrastructure
✓ Dec 15	City Council – Utility Infrastructure
Jan 8	Planning Commission
Jan 26	Joint Council & Planning Commission Workshop - LUP Existing Conditions & Survey Results
Feb __	Open House - Utility Infrastructure Public Meeting 2
Feb 12	Planning Commission (<i>LUP workshop</i>) - Discuss LUP Existing Conditions & Survey Results
Mar 12	Planning Commission (<i>LUP workshop</i>) - Future Land Use Map & Recommendations Workshop
Apr __	Virtual Public Meeting – Outreach Round 2
Apr 9	Planning Commission
Apr 13	Joint Council and Planning Commission Workshop - Future Land Use Map & Recommendations Workshop - Final thoughts
Apr 23	MLUPA Public Hearing Planning Commission
May 4	MLUPA Public Hearing Council – First Reading
May 18	MLUPA Public Hearing Council – Approves Plan

Item No. 10.

Capital Improvement Projects: *City Staff is available to discuss current project details with the public*

- **Gateway to Glacier Safety & Mobility Project** (www.columbiafallsgatewaytoglacier.com)
 - Bid Opening Jan 26; **Open House–Feb 18**; Construction Mar 2026
- **Downtown Sidewalk and Parking Improvement – Phase 2**
 - **Contract awarded**; Construction in 2026



- **Railroad St Pathway Project (MDT-led)**
 - Construction in Spring 2026
- **River’s Edge Projects**
 - **Fishing Pond Accessibility Project:** Bid Opening Feb 5; Construction in Spring 2026
 - **Sign Project:** RFP due Feb 4
- **Pinewood Aquatic Center Modernization**
 - Boiler contract awarded
 - Wading Pool Features ordered
 - Pool House Improvements

Visit the City of Columbia Falls Website and Contact Us for Questions

<https://www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org/>

<https://www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org/contact-us>



**Columbia Falls Police Department
Monthly Activity Report
December 2025**

Police	December					5 Year Average	Year to Date
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021		
Arrests (Total)	24	31	27	21	29	26	423
Adult	23	27	24	20	23	23	371
Juvenile	1	4	3	1	6	3	52
Accidents Investigated	14	21	9	13	14	14	218
Stolen Property (Value)	11057	17732	10305	26722	44600	22083	120,023
Stolen Property (Recovered)	6724	0	1483	2578	0	2157	25,294
Criminal Mischief (Incidents)	0	2	3	2	3	2	18
Damage Amount	0	50	500	100	1500	430	11,312
Misdemeanor Citations Issued	81	182	164	52	87	113	1,808
Traffic Offenses	73	157	100	40	73	89	1,607
Cell Phone Viol.	1	8	25	0	2	7	45
DUI Offenses	9	9	16	3	5	8	123
Drug Offenses	2	4	1	2	1	2	36
Traffic Stops	218	255	221	95	127	183	3,386
Court Fines and Forfeitures	24566	13325	19609	7692	13811	15801	244,002
Miles patrolled	6400	6521	12014	N/A	6795	7933	93,265
911 Phone Calls	238	207	242	141	123	190	3,117
Incident Reports	730	866	802	714	766	776	10,796
Disturbances/Assaults	14	35	18	36	28	26	286
Felony Investigations/Arrest	7	11	12	9	10	10	90
Buisness Checks	82	77	100	63	62	77	1,039
Welfare Checks	9	8	8	19	17	12	149
Citizen Assist	56	44	42	59	51	50	583
Agency Assist	21	35	17	29	32	27	373

Columbia Falls Fire Department
2025 Runs

Item No. 12.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total	2025	
calls	33	29	24	33	26	23	49	34	36	34	47	65	433		
Weeks	20	19	10	13	13	9	25	10	15	17	11	30	192	44.34%	
Peterson	15	11	6	9	7	9	26	13	16	16	14	19	161	37.18%	
Smith, R.	19	13	9	11	6	10	25	9	15	17	21	25	180	41.57%	
Thomas	18	8	9	12	5	9	25	14	18	11	20	29	178	41.11%	
Ross	16	14	3	6	3	2	7	8	8	0	2	7	76	17.55%	
Loughery	5	4	1	2	2	4	5	2	4	1	3	10	43	9.93%	
Smith, K.	5	1	10	3	10	6	14	8	5	14	14	23	113	26.10%	
Arnold	10	7	8	11	12	7	13	11	10	4	10	18	121	27.94%	
Perkins	5	4	6	3	4	3	5	1	4	3	4	10	52	12.01%	
Willcut	8	9	7	6	10	9	13	9	10	9	9	11	110	25.40%	
Woodruff	8	8	7	14	9	5	12	5	7	3	10	15	103	23.79%	
Stuhler	11	4	7	3	3	4	19	9	16	10	16	10	112	25.87%	
Grogan	0	0	9	27	26	18	40	19	24	25	20	51	259	59.82%	
Shanks	4	2	1	3	1	4	3	5	5	3	6	4	41	9.47%	
Bates	1	0	1	4	2	1	8	2	9	2	5	9	44	10.16%	
Schrader	3	6	1	2	2	1	9	1	1	0	0	6	32	7.39%	
Dickerson	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	18	34	7.85%	
Butts	7	6	3	1	3	8	5	4	2	2	9	9	59	13.63%	
Hogan	10	9	9	15	14	12	32	17	23	22	24	34	221	51.04%	
Messer	4	2	3	2	1	3	5	1	1	4	4	3	33	7.62%	
Vessels	15	20	10	20	5	6	17	3	13	4	0	0	113	26.10%	
Kienas	12	14	13	20	23	12	27	19	13	11	17	29	210	48.50%	
Johnson	14	11	6	7	5	8	7	19	16	11	8	32	144	33.26%	
Jost	6	19	8	19	9	6	21	15	8	4	5	7	127	29.33%	
Thorsteinson	5	6	6	6	3	2	8	6	5	4	5	8	64	14.78%	
Weber	2	6	1	3	1	0	8	1	1	1	3	4	31	7.16%	
Mainolfi						7	17	3	12	5	7	8	59	13.63%	
Ruben							3	4	8	6	7	9			
Swartzenberger								7	15	0	5	3			
Inabnit											1	6			
Thomas, J											0	2			
Atchley	1	2	0	0	0	0	4								
			#1 month		#2 month		2025 #1						Average:	119	27.59%
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Calls YTD 2025		
Total calls	33	29	24	33	26	23	49	37	36	34	47	65	436		
Rural	19	15	17	23	11	10	31	23	15	19	33	39	255	58.49%	
City	14	14	7	10	15	13	18	11	21	15	14	26	178	40.83%	
Mutual Aid Received	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	10	2.29%	
Mutual Aid Given	3	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	0	0	1	1	16	3.67%	
Medical & MVA	16	12	8	16	12	7	16	17	14	13	19	25	175	40.14%	

Columbia Falls Fire Department Incident Breakdown

Item No. 12.

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	YTD	2025
Dispatches	33	29	24	33	26	23	49	34	36	34	47	65	433	Dispatches
ALS Medical Total	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	9	ALS Medical Total
BLS Medical Total	16	9	8	15	12	7	16	17	13	12	15	16	156	BLS Medical Total
Medical CPR	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	6	Medical CPR
Medical ALS	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	7	Medical ALS
Medical BLS	5	5	2	4	4	2	5	8	5	5	5	7	57	Medical BLS
Medical Lift Assist	3	4	2	6	2	2	2	4	1	1	3	9	39	Medical Lift Assist
MVA with injury	4	0	2	1	2	2	5	2	1	1	4	2	26	MVA with injury
Extrication	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	Extrication
Ambulance Driver	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	7	Ambulance Driver
MVA non injury	4	0	0	4	4	1	3	3	7	5	3	5	39	MVA non injury
Airport Emergency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Airport Emergency
Traffic Control	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	Traffic Control
HazMat	4	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	11	HazMat
Hazardous Conditions	4	0	0	3	2	2	7	4	2	3	1	3	31	Hazardous Conditions
CO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	CO
Gas Leak/Odor inside	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	6	Gas Leak/Odor inside
Gas Leak/Odor outside	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	2	10	Gas Leak/Odor outside
Powerline	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	1	0	2	4	4	19	Powerline
Other	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	Other
Service	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	2	11	Service
Good Intent	1	1	3	0	2	1	3	2	6	2	1	3	25	Good Intent
Fire Alarm	1	1	0	1	1	2	5	1	2	2	5	1	22	Fire Alarm
False Alarm	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	0	4	16	False Alarm
Illegal burn	0	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	10	Illegal burn
Smoke Investigation, outside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	Smoke Investigation, outside
Smoke Investigation, inside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	Smoke Investigation, inside
Cancelled enroute	6	3	9	3	4	9	7	5	5	5	9	14	79	Cancelled enroute
Fire, residential	4	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	13	Fire, residential
Fire, chimney	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	Fire, chimney
Fire, commercial	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	9	Fire, commercial
Fire, vehicle	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	8	Fire, vehicle
Fire, vegetation, grass	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	Fire, vegetation, grass
Fire, vegetation, wildland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Fire, vegetation, wildland
Dispatch Totals	33	29	24	33	26	23	49	34	36	34	47	65	433	Dispatch Totals
Structure fires (In District)	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	12	Structure fires
Structure fires (Mutual aid)	3	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	9	
Acres burned	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0.53	Acres burned