



White Salmon City Council Budget Workshop

A G E N D A

October 15, 2025 – 4:30 PM

119 NE Church Ave

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **Purpose and Overview**
 - [A.](#) Finance and Operations
- IV. **Thematic Focus Discussion**
 - A. Infrastructure
 - [B.](#) Emergency Preparedness, Public Safety
 - [C.](#) Housing and Community Development
 - [D.](#) Engagement, Services, and Communication
- V. **Summary Discussion: Identifying Budget Priorities**
- VI. **Adjournment**

File Attachments for Item:

A. Finance and Operations



Department: Finance & Operations
Prepared By: Jennifer Neil, Director
Date: October 15, 2025

Overview

The Finance & Operations department provides financial stewardship, operational support, and compliance oversight for all City functions. In 2025, focus has centered on stabilizing operations, completing audit and financial reporting improvements, and supporting Council priorities through funding strategies, grant management, and interdepartmental coordination.

For the City to achieve Council priorities and continue to grow responsibly, the Finance department must remain strong, well-resourced, and modernized. Every priority, from housing and infrastructure to wildfire readiness and youth programs, depends on accurate financial management, transparent reporting, and sustainable fiscal planning.

Current Highlights

Housing Action Plan

- Middle Housing Grant – 100% completion, fully reimbursed by WA Dept of Commerce.
- Wrapping up the Regional Housing Rehabilitation Program – 71% completion of funding award, approximately \$57,000 remaining of award.
- Supported Public Works in aligning water and wastewater infrastructure projects with HAP objectives, ensuring system capacity planning supports future residential development.
- Provided financial oversight for USDA, PWTF, and other loan and grant programs essential to housing expansion.
- Led interdepartmental coordination to streamline finance infrastructure and process alignment between Finance and Public Works.
- Advanced transparency and public confidence through utility billing audits, corrections, and process improvements to ensure accurate, equitable, and trustworthy service delivery.

Wildfire Preparedness

- Served as EOC Finance Section Chief at the onset of the Burdoin Fire, ensuring compliant cost documentation and recovery tracking at the City.
- Currently managing the FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) process to secure reimbursement for eligible City costs.

Youth Resources and Opportunities

- Management of City contributions to WSVMPD's new pool construction.



- Streamlined budget reporting for park projects to better track city investments.

Citywide Financial Improvements

- Implemented a formal, auditable overhead cost allocation methodology replacing the informal budget-based system — aligning with GFOA, MRSC, and SAO best practices and ensuring equitable distribution of administrative costs across all funds.
- Recovered or avoided over \$93,000 in confirmed savings and identified over \$178,000 in pending corrections through targeted compliance reviews, including:
 - L&I and payroll reporting corrections (\$10,000+).
 - Police vehicle maintenance restructuring to local vendors (\$12,000 annual savings).
 - Elimination of unused Verizon lines and inactive IT devices (\$13,500 annual savings).
 - Utility billing corrections (\$157,000 corrections and/or refunds issued).
 - Reinstatement of the Transportation Benefit District fee, restoring approximately \$78,000 in lost revenue and securing sustainable transportation funding.
- Modernized contract management: decentralizing oversight to department directors, introducing standardized Smartsheet trackers, and establishing cross-checks by the Clerk for stronger compliance and transparency.
- Enhanced cash flow management for large infrastructure projects by optimizing LGIP fund timing, balancing liquidity with interest earnings (4.38% annualized return).
- Completion of the 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and implemented new Smartsheet-based corrective action systems to close documentation gaps and strengthen fund-level accountability.
- Initiated a citywide policy modernization effort: including per diem travel reimbursements, a \$10,000 SBITA capitalization threshold, and P-Card update to reduce administrative burden and align with modern standards.

Emerging Needs or Opportunities

Staff Capacity

- Need for additional accounting support to maintain compliance, reporting, and interfund oversight.

System Modernization

- Integration of accounts payable automation and electronic timekeeping to improve efficiency and reduce audit exposure.



IT Network Infrastructure

- The City's core network infrastructure requires a full overhaul to improve reliability, security, and connectivity between facilities. Outdated hardware, limited wireless capacity, and inconsistent protocols pose operational risks and limitations that we have been experiencing. Investment in this area will enhance system stability, protect financial data, and support future software integrations.

Policy and Transparency

- Continue aligning City policies with SAO and GFOA best practices while expanding public-facing financial dashboards and utility transparency tools.

Strategic Financial Planning

- Develop long-term funding strategies for the success of future Council priorities, Capital Improvement Plan, 6-Year Road Plan, and capital equipment purchases to reduce reliance on debt services.

Potential Budget Considerations for 2026

Operational Funding

- Additional staff to support ongoing infrastructure projects that are resulting in heavier burden to accounting, oversight, reporting, and compliance.
- Continued consultant support for audit prep, policy development, and financial system clean-up.

Capital / Technology Investments

- AP automation integration with Springbrook Express
- Replacement of outdated IT hardware and network infrastructure that is leading to end user inefficiencies, downtime, and system interruptions.

Discussion Questions for Council

- Are there specific funding strategies (e.g., debt reduction, reserve strengthening, or capital reinvestment) Council would like prioritized for 2026?
- How can Finance best support Council priorities?
- What level of investment does Council support for finance system modernization and transparency initiatives?

File Attachments for Item:

B. Emergency Preparedness, Public Safety

Topic: Fire Mitigation projects / West Klickitat Regional Fire Authority activities

City of White Salmon direct impact

Date: 10-09-2025

Overview: Wildfire and Fire Prevention

WKRFA is ending 2025 budget season, highly challenging year due to WKRFA transition and unanticipated expenses on numerous line items. IT, Fleet maintenance and repairs, re-branding project.

Current 2025 Highlights:

Washington State Fire Defense Committee: Sub-committee for Wildfire Summit in Moses Lake. Purpose: To assemble varied groups for the purpose of gaining traction to increase wildfire resiliency in communities by entities working and collaborating efforts more closely. Sponsor: Washington State Fire Marshal's Office Attendees: Fire Service professionals, Klickitat County Sheriff's Office, Klickitat Fire District 12, conservation districts, Office of Insurance Commissioner, Washington Survey and Ratings Bureau, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Resource Legacy Fund.

Eyrie Road, Sterling Boulevard and Brislawn Loop and Columbia Rim neighborhood associations are all actively pursuing FireWise Neighborhood recognition.

Key accomplishments or ongoing work

Burdoin Fire. Recovery ongoing. Fire districts affected were Klickitat FD4 and Klickitat FD14. WKRFA was not impacted. However, COW should pay close attention to issues/hurdles with rebuilding and know the economic impacts to the county in order to prioritize planning for future events that can cause similar damage here.

Planned full-time employee hiring plan is nearly complete. Firefighter/EMT will begin onboarding on Monday October 20th.

Staffing goal of 60 qualified firefighters. Current to date: 25 Total Roster Count: 40

2025 WKRFA officer adjustments completed. Added two Lieutenants with a training plan to address future attrition. Deputy Fire Chief position will be retained – pending board approval. Officer positions have been upgraded to key credentials, and

assessment centers. Officer (supervisors) training planned to address key WSRB element to improve WKRFA Property Protection Scoring.

Will commence volunteer duty program this winter.

· **Major grants, projects, or partnerships**

Strategizing a possible opportunity for WKRFA to host a philanthropic-funded wildfire coordinator for Klickitat County. This will benefit our community greatly if I can secure funding.

Additional work will continue with Resources Legacy Fund for Klickitat County.

White Salmon Fuel Break project is planned to resume when the State of Washington can continue pass-through grant funding.

· **Any pending obligations or commitments for 2026**

Emerging Needs or Opportunities:

· Identified service gaps or pressures

· **Regulatory or infrastructure needs:**

Key training improvement hurdle identified. WKRFA has no effective training facilities and/or grounds.

Key staffing hurdle identified: Inability to provide overnight staffing due to current Station 30 use. No dorms for sleeping.

· **Strategic opportunities:**

WKRFA to begin strategic planning for 3,5,7, and 10 years. Culture Planning, Operations and staffing, fleet rotation schedule, facilities

Potential Budget Considerations for 2026:

· Additional Operational funding (unusual/new maintenance, additional staffing)

- **Capital investment (projects or upgrades)**

Strategic planning element for fleet rotation. Engine 30-01 is due for replacement in 0-4 years. Brush 34 due for replacement immediately due to age.

- One-time planning or study needs

Discussion Questions for Council:

- What level of investment or focus should be prioritized?
- Are there specific projects Council wants evaluated for 2026?

City of White Salmon

Emergency Preparedness & Public Safety

Overview

This year brought meaningful progress in preparedness and response, with stronger coordination between staff, partners, and residents — building a more resilient and connected community ready to meet future emergencies together.

2025 Highlights

- Hosted the City's second Wildfire Open House, bringing residents, natural resource partners, fire agencies, and emergency management together under one roof. Resources on defensible space, evacuation readiness, and mitigation helped inform and promote proactive preparedness ahead of fire season.
- During the Burdoin Wildfire, the City mobilized every available resource - people, equipment, and partnerships - to meet the emergency head-on. City leadership, staff, and Council worked tirelessly to coordinate efforts that led to the Disaster Assistance Center, which became a vital one-stop resource for survivors - providing case management, cleanup support, therapy dog visits, and donated essentials from across the community.
- After the fire, the City continues to work closely with Klickitat County Emergency Management and partner agencies to support affected residents. The lessons learned continue to guide how we plan, communicate, and collaborate in future emergencies.

Emerging Needs / Opportunities

- Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG): Building on lessons from the Burdoin Fire, City staff continue to support formation of a regional recovery network that coordinates volunteers, resources, and sustained recovery capacity for future incidents.
- Community Resilience Building: Expand wildfire preparedness education and outreach, including multilingual resources that strengthen awareness and mitigation efforts before the next disaster.
- Interagency Coordination: Continue strengthening collaboration among county, regional, and nonprofit partners to improve communication, planning, and resource sharing throughout all phases of disaster response and recovery.

Potential Budget Considerations – FY2026

- Continued staff training and participation in emergency management exercises will strengthen coordination and recovery readiness, highlighting the need for sustained program development funding.
- Expanding outreach and translation capabilities is essential to ensure all residents

have access to critical information before, during, and after emergencies, underscoring the importance of language-access resources in next year's budget.

- Investing in tools and tech enabling advanced coordination in real-time, demonstrating the value of continued equipment and technology support in FY2026.

Discussion Questions for Council

- What level of investment and interagency coordination should the City prioritize to strengthen preparedness, response, and long-term recovery capabilities in 2026?
- Are there specific community education, mitigation, or recovery initiatives Council would like to see advanced as part of the City's ongoing emergency preparedness and resilience efforts?

File Attachments for Item:

C. Housing and Community Development

Topic: Planning, Housing, and Community Development

Prepared by: Rowan Fairfield, City Planner

Date: 10/10/2025

Overview:

Most of the Planning Dept budget is used for personnel, whether in-house City staff or outside contracted consultants. Our first priority is administering the municipal code for current land use applications and building permits. We continue to work on long-range projects for housing, recreation, community development, and transportation, sometimes in a supporting role.

Current 2025 Highlights:

- *Passed Ordinance for Tree Protection & Heritage Trees (revised)*
- *Passed Ordinance for Unit Lot Subdivisions (new)*
- *Hired a City Planner and an Associate Planner*
- *Completed the Bluff Connector Trail Study*

Emerging Needs or Opportunities:

- *Title 19 needs revisions and clarifications*
- *Land Use Fee Schedule to be revisited*
- *Continuing search for funding for housing and infrastructure*
- *Continuing to improve our processes, tools, and data*

Potential Budget Considerations for 2026:

- *Comprehensive Plan Update, including review of Critical Areas Ordinance (required periodic review, due June 2027)*
- *“The Big Upzone”, bringing our current zoning map into alignment with the Comp Plan’s land use designations.*
- *Continuing to transition as much work to City staff as possible, and use outside consultants when needed*
- *Continuing to implement the Housing Action Plan*
- *Supporting the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Replacement project as needed*
- *Realizing a first phase of the Bluff Connector Trail*

Discussion Questions for Council:

- *Are there specific projects Council wants evaluated for 2026?*
- *What improvements does Council want this department to focus on in 2026?*

File Attachments for Item:

D. Engagement, Services, and Communication

City of White Salmon

Equity & Access, Community Engagement, Code Enforcement, and Communications

Overview

This cross-department focus area covers how residents access City services, how we communicate and engage, and how we report Code Enforcement outcomes. 2025 work centered on restarting consistent engagement, improving language access, and building predictable enforcement. The focus is on info/delivery and education, voluntary compliance programs, and ultimately enforcement. We've worked to strengthen the presence and impact across the White Salmon community.

2025 Highlights

- Program Maturation - Transition from development and outreach to enforcement, implementing procedures including:
 - (Statutory) Case file structure & documentation standards
 - (Timeline) Solidified abatement workflow development
 - (Coordination) Consistent Internal/external dept notification protocols
- Community Engagement - Expanded outreach through Spring Cleaning Month, Farmers Market tables, Voyent Alert messages, and creating/updating the Code Compliance webpage on the city website to ensure that community members have up-to-date code compliance information.

Emerging Needs / Opportunities

- Refinement of centralized case-management system for improved tracking and reporting.
- Increased field presence demand and reporting tools to meet enforcement activity and community growth.
- Further outreach program expansion supporting nuisance prevention and wildfire-readiness.
- Establish a modest City Councilor Community Engagement Fund to support small-scale neighborhood events and outreach projects, with clear parameters to ensure equitable and transparent use.

Potential Budget Considerations - FY2026

- Program Development: Ongoing professional education and networking to identify best practices and refine procedures that help the City's compliance program evolve with community needs.
- Technology investment: Continued investment in mobile inspection tools supports real-time communication, faster service delivery, and greater efficiency for residents and staff. Maintain Council Travel and Training to preserve flexibility for workshops and engagement learning.
- Increase outreach and promotional materials funding to reflect price increases and support the City's expanded presence at community events.

- Funding for interpreter and translation services to ensure essential City forms and communications are accessible to all residents and reflect the needs of our diverse community (EN/ES).
- Outreach and materials: Funding for bilingual materials, messaging opportunities (articles), and community event participation.

Discussion Questions for Council:

- What level of investment should be prioritized for language access (interpreted meetings; translated forms)?
- Does Council support a modest City Councilor Community Engagement Fund?
- Are there specific projects Council wants evaluated for 2026?