

Moscow City Council



Regular Meeting
~Minutes~

Laurie M. Hopkins
City Clerk

www.ci.moscow.id.us

208.883.7015

Monday, April 6, 2026

7:00 PM

Council Chambers
206 E. Third St.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Hailey Lewis, Bryce Blankenship, Evan Holmes, Sandra Kelly, Sage McCetich, Scott Sumner

ABSENT: Drew Davis

STAFF: Bill Belknap, Mia Bautista, David Schott, Brian Nickerson, Anthony Dahlinger, Nichoel Baird Spencer, Steve Schulte, Tyler Palmer, Bob Buvel, Evan Timar, Justin Kilborn, Laurie M. Hopkins

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Lewis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS

Fair Housing Proclamation

Mayor Lewis read the proclamation.

Arbor Day

Mayor Lewis read the proclamation and presented it to David Schott.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. All Consent Items (ACTION ITEM)

A. Approval of Moscow City Council March 16, 2026 Minutes - Laurie M. Hopkins

B. Approval of Payment of Claims - Sarah Decker

C. Earth Day Celebration Alcohol Use Request in East City Park - Amanda Argona

Inland North Waste is sponsoring an Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 25th, from 4 to 7 pm in East City Park. The annual event honors the ways our community protects and preserves our environment and is offered free of charge. Live music and eco-minded organizations are part of this event, in addition to food and a beer garden. The applicant anticipates 1 (one) licensed beer vendor in the beer garden, which is estimated to be 25'x25' in size. Following standard operating procedures for events with alcohol within a City Park, Inland North Waste is requesting the allowance of attendees to possess and consume alcoholic beverages within the 25'x25' beer garden during the aforementioned date and time. Per Moscow City Code, Section 5-13-4, a draft resolution has been prepared by the Community Events Division and reviewed by the Legal Department for the Council's consideration to permit this typically prohibited activity. This was reviewed by the Administrative Committee on February 23, 2026 and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Approve the resolution allowing for the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the designated beer garden in East City Park for Earth Day Celebration for the duration of the event; or provide staff with further direction.

D. North and South Mountain View Pedestrian Improvements - Bid Results and Contract Award - Scott Bontrager

In 2022, the City of Moscow submitted and received funding for two Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects due to increased federal COVID-related funding. The Mountain View Road corridor was selected to improve the non-motorized transportation gaps along the northern and southern segments of the road. The northern segment includes adding about 1,600 feet of curb, gutter, and sidewalk to the west side of Mountain View Road from F Street to Slonaker Drive. The southern segment includes adding about 900 feet of curb, gutter, sidewalk, and green strip on both sides of Mountain View from Paradise Creek to Joseph Street. The southern segment also includes the installation of a pedestrian warning beacon at the Paradise Path crossing, installation of sidewalk along the northern side of the Latah County Fairgrounds, and some intersection improvements at Blaine Street and Harold Ave. The City published an advertisement for bids on February 10, 2026, and the Engineer's Estimate for construction was \$1,277,521.86. Bids were opened on March 3, 2026, at which five (5) bids were received. The bids ranged from \$1,025,088.98 to \$2,285,746.76. Of those bids, the lowest responsive bid received was submitted by LaRiviere Incorporated of Rathdrum, ID with a bid of \$1,025,088.98. A bid tabulation is included in the packet. This was reviewed by the Administrative Committee on March 23, 2026, and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Accept the bid from LaRiviere Inc., award the contract in the amount of \$1,025,088.98 and authorize City Engineer approval of construction change orders in an amount not to exceed 10% of the contract amount.

E. Palouse Mall Lift Station Rehabilitation Project - Bid Results and Contract Award - Scott Bontrager

This project's scope is to rehabilitate the existing Palouse Mall lift station, which includes replacing the wet well cover and hatch, replacing the existing pumps with submersible pumps, new electrical/control, upgrading the existing force main out of the wet well, fence upgrades, and installing a new valve vault and flow meter vault. The City published an advertisement for bids on January 24, 2026, and the Engineer's Estimate for construction was \$2,115,992.50. Bids were opened on March 3, 2026, at which five (5) bids were received. The bids ranged from \$1,247,047.00 to \$1,886,420.00. Of those bids, the lowest responsive bid received was submitted by DW Excavating of Davenport, WA with a bid of \$1,247,047.00. A bid tabulation is included in the packet. This was reviewed by the Administrative Committee on March 23, 2026, and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Accept the bid from DW Excavating, award the contract in the amount of \$1,247,047.00 and authorize City Engineer approval of construction change orders in an amount not to exceed 10% of the contract amount.

Kelly moved and McCetich seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. Mayors Appointments (ACTION ITEM)

Mayor Lewis presented to the City Council for consideration the appointment of LaRae Tomera and Anne Marshall to the Historic Preservation Commission and Courtney Jensen to the Human Rights Commission. Kelly moved and Blankenship seconded approval of the appointment. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Courtney Jensen is looking forward to working with the HRC so human rights are celebrated.

3. Public Comment (limit 15 minutes)

Joann Muneta (Moscow) considers herself a stakeholder for the East City Park. She has been concerned about the stage from the very beginning and recently was able to look at the 60% plan. She was pleased to see that some of the suggestions made have been incorporated. She does ask why the dance area is paved. Comments have said more grass and less concrete. May brings rain but for the last 40 years events have used straw and dancing can still occur. She feels now is the time to make more changes.

Mayor Lewis said final design is approaching. She pointed out this process is following the same process as any bid for infrastructure. Public comment has been taken previously and comments are being heard.

4. Whitcom AI Call Taking Presentation – Wendy Barrett / Anthony Dahlinger

Chief Dahlinger reported that the City has partnered with Whitcom for many years. Whitcom is currently implementing an AI-assisted call-taking system and introduced Wendy Barrett and Brenden McNanny from Whitcom to provide an overview of the program.

Barrett explained that the system, Aurelian AI, will be used for non-emergency calls, which account for approximately 70% of total call volume. The software is currently in use by 16–17 counties in Washington. The intent is to provide dispatchers with brief intervals between calls, allowing improved focus on emergency calls and radio traffic, and ultimately enhancing customer service. The program is highly customizable. Whitcom has conducted limited live testing over the past several weeks, consisting of four test periods of 2–4 hours each to identify and resolve issues, with additional testing planned. Current staffing includes 13 fully trained dispatchers and 2 trainees, compared to the desired staffing level of 20. Barrett noted that reducing workload through this system may help improve staff retention.

McNanny reported that, prior to selecting Aurelian, three different software options were evaluated, with Aurelian being the only system currently in use by comparable agencies. Staff visited Moses Lake, which has utilized the system for approximately three years.

Aurelian will not handle 911 or emergency calls, nor calls requiring emotional intelligence. The system is configurable to determine which call types it will process and what information is collected. If there is any uncertainty regarding whether a call is an emergency, it is immediately routed to a dispatcher. Whitcom will provide agencies with a dedicated phone number that will connect directly to dispatch.

For non-emergency calls, Aurelian gathers, filters, transcribes, and summarizes call information. Dispatchers can review summaries, listen to full calls or excerpts, and make corrections as needed. The system identifies key words and includes a configurable “resistance level” (1–7), which determines how persistently it gathers information before transferring a call. This can be adjusted based on caller frustration and service considerations.

Implementation timing remains dependent on both technical readiness and operational comfort, with a target of going live by the end of the year.

Barrett acknowledged some initial staff hesitation due to the introduction of AI. Efforts have been made to share information from other agencies, provide ongoing updates, and solicit feedback throughout the process. Feedback from peer agencies has indicated the system is a significant improvement.

McNanny stated that partner agencies will be provided with information, and a joint decision will be made regarding public communication. It was reiterated that Aurelian will only handle non-emergency calls, and all 911 calls will continue to be answered directly by dispatchers. Data is hosted in the Amazon

GovCloud, a public safety-compliant environment. The system can interpret multiple languages, though processing may take additional time to ensure accuracy.

Dahlinger noted that from a law enforcement perspective, interaction with the system will be minimal, as Aurelian will have already processed and organized the information prior to dispatch involvement.

5. Annual Fire Department Report – Brian Nickerson

Chief Nickerson provided statistics for the 2025 calls which totaled 3,046 with rescue and emergency being the largest percentage at 77%. Overlapping incidents, which could be 2, 3, or 4 calls being responded at the same time averaged 32%. Nickerson went through the types of fire and EMS incidents and statistics. With false alarms, the department highlights education rather than tickets and are seeing an increase of fire alarm installations. All fires are required to be investigated for origin and cause, and the department does this in-house rather than the state investigator. The Department's outreach includes fire prevention, fire station tours, sports team escorts, classes and community fairs. The department has had trouble with the most recent records management program and is now switching to a new vendor. An estimated 13% of EMS volunteers are community residents and an estimated 51% of EMS volunteers are regular students. The student resident program was expanded to 30 participants last year but will be returning to 25 this fall as it is a lot to manage. Nickerson spoke on the different training's volunteers have access to and the top 5 priorities for the department. Students may remain in the area over the summer and are permitted to stay at the station. Staff consists of two 12-hour shifts with four personnel per shift. Previously, fewer than 1% of students signed up for holiday shifts; however, participation has improved with the addition of stipends. In response to questions about increased incidents, Nickerson noted that the trend is occurring across all cities. Contributing factors include an aging population and changes in construction, which have reduced the time to escape a house fire from approximately 10–14 minutes to 3–5 minutes.

6. Woodbury Replat Development Agreement Amendment and Monumentation Agreement (ACTION ITEM) - Bob Buvel

Levi Wintz, on behalf of Woodbury Land, LLC., has submitted to the City a final replat of the Woodbury 1st Addition. On February 02, 2026, the City Council approved the Final Replat of this property. The final replat is titled Replat of Woodbury 1st Addition. As Council approved the final replat, development and monumentation agreements will be required prior to recording the document with Latah County. The development agreement amendment is necessary to address changes in construction of public improvements associated with the replat and assigning maintenance of portions of the infrastructure. The Monumentation Agreement is required as the interior property corners will not be set until after the final plat has been filed, the earthwork has been completed, and the utilities have been installed. In such instances, an agreement obligating the establishment of these interior corners is required by Idaho Code. Staff has prepared both the Amendment to the Development Agreement and the Amended Monumentation Agreement for the Council's approval. The agreements were reviewed by the Administrative Committee on March 23, 2026 and recommended for approval.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Approve the Development Agreement Amendment and Amended Monumentation Agreement for the Replat Woodbury 1st Addition, or take other action deemed appropriate.

Sumner recused himself from this item. Buvel introduced the item as written above. Language was added in the development agreement to address the construction and maintenance of the pavers. Language was also updated to reflect the new phasing. Due to the increased density, the monumentation agreement also needed to be updated as the price is based on density. Between the Administrative Committee and Council meetings, there was one change to the paver installation. The material supplier indicated that setting the pavers in concrete was not a recommended practice in an area that freezes and thaws. Staff are currently

evaluating different installation methods but thought by letting the city engineer approve the installation method, it would provide some flexibility.

Kelly moved to approve the development agreement amendment and amended monumentation agreement for the replant Woodbury 1st addition. Blankenship seconded. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

7. 2025 Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Utility Rate Study (ACTION ITEM) - Tyler Palmer

In January 2025, the City of Moscow retained FCS Group to conduct comprehensive rate studies for the City's Water, Sewer, and Stormwater utilities. These periodic studies are essential to ensure that utility revenues remain sufficient to support current and future operations, maintenance, and capital improvements, while also allocating costs equitably among system users. To incorporate community input, a Citizen Rate Committee (CRC) was convened on April 8, 2025. The CRC included representatives from residential, commercial, institutional, and nonprofit sectors. Over the course of three formal meetings, supplemented by ongoing communication and review materials, the committee evaluated rate scenarios, financial projections, and cost-of-service analyses. At the conclusion of its work, the CRC unanimously approved recommendations for each utility. The committee also recommended that the City explore the development of utility rate relief programs to assist low-income customers. City staff supports the CRC's recommendations. Adoption of the recommended rate structures will provide the revenues necessary to fund utility operations, maintenance, and planned capital projects identified in the City's adopted Capital Improvement Program. The phased adjustments will ensure long-term financial stability of the Water, Sewer, and Storm utilities while aligning rates with the cost of service and regulatory requirements.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Approve the 2025 Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Utility Rate Study recommendations, or take other action deemed appropriate.

Staff presented the completed water, sewer, and stormwater utility rate study, describing it as a foundational process necessary to ensure system reliability, long-term financial stability, and fairness to ratepayers. Utilities operate as enterprise funds and must remain self-supporting, with revenues legally tied to utility-related expenses. Staff emphasized the City's proactive approach to maintenance to avoid more costly system failures and noted efforts to limit rate impacts through efficiencies and technology, without adding staff despite system growth. Construction inflation, which continues to outpace CPI, was identified as a significant cost driver. Compared to peer agencies experiencing double-digit increases, the proposed rates are more moderate due to prior planning, including completion of major water projects and favorable loan financing.

The City's consultant, FCS Group, outlined the three-step rate study process: determining total revenue requirements over a multi-year period, evaluating cost of service to ensure equitable distribution among customer classes, and designing rates to recover the needed revenue. Analysis showed that current revenues are insufficient to meet ongoing operational and capital needs across all three utilities. Water and sewer shortfalls are primarily driven by capital improvement needs, while the stormwater utility lacks sufficient funding for both operations and future capital investment. Capital improvement plans total approximately \$13.6 million for water, \$45.1 million for sewer, and \$5.7 million for stormwater.

Recommended rate adjustments for 2027 through 2031 include annual increases of approximately 5.15% for water and 2.8% for sewer, both supporting fully cash-funded capital programs with no new debt. Stormwater rates require higher phased increases, beginning with larger adjustments to build necessary capital capacity. The combined average residential bill impact is estimated at approximately 5.7–6% initially, decreasing to about 4.3% by 2031. Cost of service analysis found most customer classes generally

aligned, though some adjustments are needed, including phased increases for the cemetery class and rebalancing among sewer customer classes.

The primary structural change proposed is the transition of multifamily sewer rates from a fixed rate to a combination of fixed and variable charges over a three-year period beginning in 2028, improving equity and encouraging conservation. Stormwater rates include funding for the Creek Maintenance Plan, adjusted to an every-other-year project cycle to reduce rate impacts. Staff highlighted the importance of community input through the citizen rate committee, which included representation from various sectors and helped guide recommendations.

A citizen committee member and local property manager spoke in support of the process, noting that the proposed multifamily sewer rate restructuring addresses longstanding inequities between unit types and may help reduce costs for smaller, more affordable units. He also emphasized the real impact of utility costs on tenants and property owners, encouraged ongoing evaluation of affordability, and suggested future consideration of conservation incentives, security deposit levels, and policies related to leak adjustments under a volume-based sewer system.

Staff noted that the cemetery is planning to transition to a well system, which will mitigate future rate impacts, and reiterated that utility funds must remain within their respective systems, with only documented internal service costs allocated across departments. Council discussion included clarification that capital plans do not assume grant funding but can be adjusted annually through the budget or future rate studies. Staff confirmed that sewer rates for single-family residences are fixed and not impacted by irrigation usage, and that monthly billing is preferred due to the City's transient population. Council also discussed stormwater rate structures, utility deposits, and broader affordability concerns, while acknowledging the intentional, data-driven nature of the rate-setting process.

McCetich moved to approve the 2025 Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Utility Rate Study. Seconded by Blankenship. Kelly commented raising rates is always difficult for constituents and the Council does not take it lightly. Sumner appreciated taking into account the full capital improvements for prevention of emergency situations with the utilities and the opportunity to make adjustments year to year. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried. *

REPORTS

City Council

Historic Preservation Commission – Kelly reported the Commission is narrowing in on the University district. They are also looking at another historic sign, this one in Friendship Square.

Human Rights Commission – Holmes said the Commission sponsored the immigration rights forum.

Sustainable Environment Commission – Holmes said the Commission is drafting a couple letters in support of community solar and a water conservation plan.

Fair and Affordable Housing Commission – Holmes said they are prepping for the fair housing workshop. Also received a presentation from the housing trust.

Parks and Recreation Commission – Sumner said they are finalizing days for tabling at the Farmers Market and scheduling the annual tour of the parks.

Moscow Arts Commission – Sumner said the commission has many requests for artists for art projects.

Council members also spoke on other meetings and events.

Mayor

Mayor Lewis shared information from her trip to Washington DC regarding airports and the BUILD grant.

ADJOURN

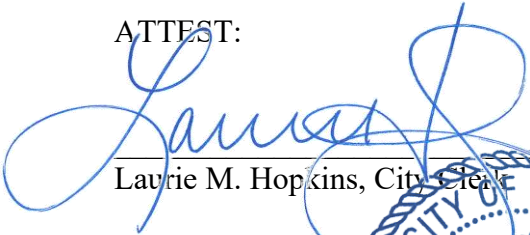
It was moved, seconded and mutually agreed up on to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

** Text generated with the assistance of ChatGPT, version GPT-5.3 (www.chatgpt.com)*

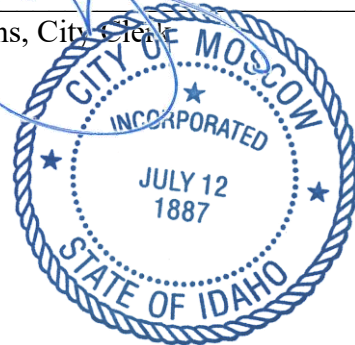


Hailey Lewis, Mayor

ATTEST:



Laurie M. Hopkins, City Clerk





Committee Recommended Scenarios

Description	Existing		Adopted		Proposed		
	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Water - Cash Funded CIP Well 10 in FY 2035		4.00%	5.15%	5.15%	5.15%	5.15%	5.15%
Average Bill	\$ 65.46	\$ 68.08	\$ 71.59	\$ 75.28	\$ 79.16	\$ 83.24	\$ 87.53
\$ Impact		\$ 2.62	\$ 3.51	\$ 3.69	\$ 3.88	\$ 4.08	\$ 4.29
Sewer - Cash Funded CIP No WRRF in FY 2037		2.25%	2.80%	2.80%	2.80%	2.80%	2.80%
Average Bill	\$ 57.22	\$ 58.51	\$ 60.15	\$ 61.83	\$ 63.56	\$ 65.34	\$ 67.17
\$ Impact		\$ 1.29	\$ 1.64	\$ 1.68	\$ 1.73	\$ 1.78	\$ 1.83
Stormwater - Reduced Maintenance		3.00%	29.00%	29.00%	15.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Average Bill	\$ 8.40	\$ 8.65	\$ 11.16	\$ 14.40	\$ 16.56	\$ 17.55	\$ 18.60
\$ Impact		\$ 0.25	\$ 2.51	\$ 3.24	\$ 2.16	\$ 0.99	\$ 1.05
Average Residential Bill Increase		3.17%	5.66%	6.03%	5.13%	4.30%	4.32%
Average Residential Bill	\$ 131.08	\$ 135.24	\$ 142.90	\$ 151.51	\$ 159.28	\$ 166.13	\$ 173.30
\$ Impact		\$ 4.16	\$ 7.66	\$ 8.61	\$ 7.77	\$ 6.85	\$ 7.17

Notes:

1. Water bill assumes 7 ccf of usage
2. Increases assume across the board application, before cost of service adjustments are incorporated