

COLFAX CITY COUNCIL
January 20, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Retzer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL:

McRae, Schaefer, Mackleit, Guentner and Sevedge: Present. Golden and Huntwork: Absent. A motion was entered by McRae, seconded by Schaefer to excuse Golden and Huntwork. Roll Call: All Yes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was entered by Guentner, seconded by Schaefer to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2025 Council meeting. Roll Call: All Yes.

GOOD OF THE CITY:

Downtown Christmas décor has been taken down for the year.

DSW (Distinguished Young Women) has started, the program will be held later this spring.

BILLS AND CLAIMS:

A motion was entered by Schaefer, seconded by McRae to approve all bills and claims as presented. Roll Call: All Yes.

CLAIMS

#11461-11488, & EFT
\$66,550.25

PAYROLL

#11446-11460 & EFT
\$77,758.98

GRAND TOTAL: \$144,309.23

CITIZENS REQUEST:

PUBLIC HEARING:

PRESENTATION/WORK STUDY:

Port of Whitman- Brownfield Cleanup- Roger's Seed Plant-

Port of Whitman Executive Director Kara Riebold distributed a flyer regarding the Rogers Brothers Seed Company Site Brownfields Cleanup Project- The property located behind the high school has been identified as a potential location for a future childcare facility. The Port has been working with the current landowner on a feasibility study funded by an assessment grant. The initial phases of this study have generated the following findings:

Phase 1: Identified the historical use of the site as a seed treatment plant and a coal shed.

COLFAX CITY COUNCIL

January 20, 2026

Phase 2: Soil sampling confirmed that environmental cleanup is required.

The Port is scheduled to close on the purchase of the property this month. Once the Port assumes ownership, they will pursue a cleanup grant to begin the remediation process. Currently, two primary options for cleanup are being considered: encapsulating and sealing the debris on-site, or hauling the material offsite.

Port Commissioner Tom Kammerzell (District 3) noted that the Port is uniquely positioned to handle a project of this scale due to their access to specific grants and resources that would be unavailable to a private individual.

Colfax School District Levy-

Wes Claassen applauded the possible childcare facility; it could be good for possible prospective school employees.

Claassen stated the proposed levy is a replacement of the current levy expiring in 2026, rather than a new tax. It is essential for supporting vital student activities, including FBLA, choir, jazz band, and the school play.

There are two primary reasons for the requested increase from the previous \$1.14 million to \$1.6 million:

- Loss of State Funding: Due to rising property values, the district has lost \$251,000 in Local Effort Assistance (LEA) funds from the state. The levy increase is necessary to recover these funds.
- Inflation: The increase accounts for the rising costs of operations and supplies.

It is important to note that this remains the fourth-lowest levy in our area for schools similar to Colfax. Claassen encouraged everyone to get out and vote for this replacement school levy to ensure continued support for our students.

Whitman Recovery Community Center-

Megan Guido, the Director of Whitman Recovery Community, is currently reaching out to raise awareness about their organization. Having opened on March 30, 2025, the center is affiliated with the Latah Recovery Center in Moscow and is operated by a director, a peer specialist, and approximately 20 volunteers.

As highlighted in the Whitman County Public Health Needs Assessment, issues surrounding opioids, substance use, alcohol, and mental health are major concerns in our community. Currently, there are no other resources quite like this in the four-county area. Whitman Recovery Community offers free services, including:

COLFAX CITY COUNCIL

January 20, 2026

- One-on-one peer coaching
- Treatment resources and coordination
- 12-step recovery groups
- Community trainings, such as QPR and Mental Health First Aid

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Police:

Chief Michael Melcher announced that a conditional offer of employment has been extended to Ivan Martinez, with the goal of having him begin at the academy in March.

Regarding the investigation on South Palouse River Road, Chief Melcher confirmed that the human remains discovered just outside of town have been identified as those of missing person Michael Garcia.

Officers have been occupied with several recent incidents, including collisions and domestic violence assaults, while also continuing their ongoing records training.

Public Works:

Hammer stated with the mild winter weather crews have been able to catch up on projects and begin finish work done around the pool.

COMMITTEE/BOARD/COMMISSION REPORTS:

OTHER BUSINESS:

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

MAYORS REPORT:

Retzer notified the council there has been noise complaints regarding the railroad and generator used to maintain the locomotive temperatures.

The generator operates when temperatures drop below 50 degrees, running for 45-minute intervals with breaks of 10 to 15 minutes. The generator is used as a quieter alternative to running the locomotive engine itself.

Retzer and Hammer have met with WATCO and the affected neighbors to discuss these concerns. This section of the rail is designated for a maintenance line and is federally regulated. A complaint file with the EPA, WATCO provided a full explanation of their operations, and the EPA closed the investigation.

The railroad is exempt from the provisions of the Noise Control Ordinance.

Retzer wanted to ensure the council was informed of the ongoing discussions regarding the issue.

COLFAX CITY COUNCIL
January 20, 2026

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Retzer adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.


Jim Retzer, Mayor


Lynda Kramlich, City Clerk