

COLFAX CITY COUNCIL
February 2, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL:

Golden, McRae, Schaefer, Mackleit, Guenther, Sevedge and Huntwork: Present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was entered by Golden, seconded by Schaefer to approve the minutes from the January 20, 2026 Council meeting. Roll Call: McRae, Schaefer, Mackleit, Guenther and Sevedge Yes. Huntwork and Golden: Abstained.

GOOD OF THE CITY:

Saturday Whitman Community Hospital Auxiliary hit a major milestone at the Hospital Foundation Dinner and Auction by raising \$10 million throughout their fundraising efforts over the years.

Colfax High School Girls and Boys Basketball along with the Cheerleaders, will celebrate Senior Night Tuesday February 3rd.

BILLS AND CLAIMS:

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

CLAIMS

#11496-11520 & EFT
\$13,368.49

PAYROLL

#11489-11494 & EFT
\$100,456.56

Check #11467 payable to JTI was in the amount of \$3,735.80 was voided due to vendor error. Check #11495 was issued to John Deere Financial for the same amount. There was no change to total expenditures from last council.

GRAND TOTAL: \$113,825.05

CITIZENS REQUEST:

Andrew Nolan- 615 N Perkins Ave- read a prepared statement regarding his concerns with the generators running to keep the locomotive liquids warm, stating the low frequency disruptions it causes his family and neighbors day and night. This began in September 2025 and six families have joined in a complaint sent to the railroad. Their asking for the railroad to recognize this nuisance, have open communications with WATCO and coordinate with the Whitman County Health Department on the health concerns of the constant low frequency noise disruptions.

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PUBLIC HEARING:

PRESENTATION/WORK STUDY:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution 26-01- Best Western Hotel Motel Application:

Sales Director at the Best Western Wheatland Inn- Ken Taylor is asking for \$22,000 for Picturesque Palouse Tourism Van Program. Taylor reported 47% of their business is derived from photography. The hotel has 29 groups of photographers booked this year. Taylor would like to fund a community-branded photography-friendly van that can transport photographers, Colfax community members and hotel visitors. Taylor outlined three options: city ownership, nonprofit/tourism association ownership or stewardship model. At this time the hotel can't afford to employ another person as a driver for the van.

Golden likes this idea as a concept and would be in favor of it but it is a little premature to go for a vote tonight. This would need to stick with a nonprofit such as the Chamber of Commerce. There was also discussion of maintenance and scheduling, someone will need to be in charge of that as well.

Sevedge interjected this would be a great idea for-profit business venture.

Retzer agreed this is a great idea and suggested Taylor come back with either the Chamber and or hotel as the applicant.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Police:

Chief Michael Melcher reported Ivan Martinez's official start date will be April 1st and will begin the Police Academy April 19th. Melcher has been purchasing uniforms and equipment needed prior to his start.

Melcher submitted the grant for Bill 2015 Public Safety Funding Program. He applied for \$250,000 which could pay for 75% of 2 positions over a 3-year period. Whitman county put in for the Sales and Use Tax funding option.

Stats so far this year:

146- traffic stops

9- criminal cases

77- calls for service

Melcher will be attending records training and will likely miss the next council meeting.

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Fire:

Firefighter John Lautenslager reported they were fortunate Friday to supply manpower for 2 major events that happened at the same time, a travel trailer fire on James Street and a major car accident outside city limits.

Lautenslager just completed underground main and sprinkler system training.

Public Works:

Hammer reported crews will be out working on North Palouse River Road this week. He stated the water improvement project is scheduled to begin mid-March.

Mackleit requested that Hammer address concerns raised by Andrew Nolan regarding the noise associated with the railroad locomotive.

Hammer explained he and Retzer have met with representatives of the railroad. The locomotive in question is located on a federally designated maintenance track. A generator runs to keep the fluids at approximately 80°. According to the railroad, this method reduces diesel fuel consumption and produces cleaner exhaust than running the locomotive engine. Discussion occurred regarding the possibility of relocating the locomotive out of town however, Hammer stated that identifying and implementing a solution will take time.

Greg Nolan- 806 N Summit- noted that the city has a noise ordinance and cited the prohibition of semi-trucks using jake brakes while coming down the hills into town.

Retzer read a portion of CMC 8.20.050 Noise Control Exemptions stating railroads are listed in the exemptions and reiterated the location of the train is in a federally designated work zone. Retzer acknowledged and sympathizes with the concerns of the neighbors and stated that staff have contacted the appropriate parties to explore potential resolutions. Retzer stated the tracks are state owned and subject to federal mandates. Retzer suggested we speak with our State Representatives to express concerns.

Shaefer commented that this is a tough situation.

Rod Nemitz- 807 Ackerman Lane- stating this generator runs remotely on and off 24 hours a day. He described the sound as comparable to tinnitus, resulting in constant head ache and increased stress. Nemitz reported that the railroad indicated the generator is necessary to maintain an 80° core temperature. Potential solutions discussed included installing a sound barrier around the generator or relocating the engine further south. Nemitz state the sound is 138 hertz tone produced by a 3-cylinder diesel engine at 5,500 RPM, and the generator runs approximately 20 hours per day.

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Hammer stated he will contact the Washington State Department of Ecology to seek additional information and possible guidance regarding the issue.

COMMITTEE/BOARD/COMISSION REPORTS:

OTHER BUSINESS:

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

MAYORS REPORT:


Retzer said he recently completed evaluations for all city employees and remarked that we don't know how lucky we are to have the employees that we do. People stepped up into new position, learned those roles and performed well. We came through a tragic event and we are in a great place.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Retzer adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.


Jim Retzer, Mayor


Lynda Kramlich, City Clerk