

CLE ELUM CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 23, 2025
6:00 PM
 119 W FIRST STREET
 CLE ELUM, WA 98922

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call

Present:

Cassidy Buechle-Curtis
 Ken Ratliff
 Beth Williams - via zoom
 Jerred Weis
 Steven Cook
 Audrey Malek
 Steven Harper - via zoom

Staff Present:

Matthew Lundh - Mayor
 Rob Omans - City Administrator
 Debbie Lee - Clerk
 Colleda Monick - Planner
 William La Rue - Water/Wastewater Manager
 Mathew Bailey - Public Works Director
 Ed Mills - Fire Chief
 Rich Albo - Police Chief

- a. September 23, 2025, Sign In Sheet

2. Executive Session RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)

- a. (i) To discuss with legal counsel representing the agency matters relating to agency enforcement actions, or to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency litigation or potential litigation to which the agency, the governing body, or a member acting in an official capacity is, or is likely to become, a party.

The Council entered Executive Session at 6:10 p.m. for a duration of 30 minutes and reconvened at 6:40 p.m. The Executive Session was then extended for an additional 15 minutes, with the Council returning to open session at 6:55 p.m. No decisions were made after the Executive Session.

- b. September 23, 2025, Executive Session Script

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3. Public Comment – Limited to 5 Minutes

Larry Stauffer, had comments regarding a presentation the Kittitas Conservation Trust was going to give, which presented the 30% design for the Hanson Ponds project. He requested that the Council defer responding to any questions or making decisions at this time, as there are still outstanding issues that require further discussion.

4. Announcements, Appointments, Awards & Recognition

- a. Outstanding Treatment Plant Award, by Department of Ecology - Mayor Lundh

Department of Ecology 2024 Waste Water Treatment Plant Outstanding Performance Award:

The Mayor announced that the city received a letter from the Washington State Department of Ecology recognizing the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) with the 2024 Outstanding Performance Award. This award highlights the plant's role in providing critical services to the community.

Coleman Miller from the Department of Ecology addressed the Council, emphasizing the significance of the award. He noted that it is not a participation award, but an honor given to only a handful of treatment plants across the state. To qualify, facilities must meet all requirements of their permit, including rigorous testing, accurate reporting, and maintaining 100% compliance for an entire year with no violations or late submissions.

Coleman Miller acknowledged the following staff members for their contributions to this achievement: William LaRue, Bill Newman, Austin Simmons, and Daniel Alcaraz.

5. Approval of Meeting Agenda

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the agenda with the following two changes: strike Item 8C - Shasta Marion as she is not in attendance and strike Item 11F - Airport Lease with Cody Scriver, citing concerns regarding the potential bankruptcy and the importance of preserving the airport as a valuable asset, rather than committing it to a 25-year lease at this time; seconded by Councilmember Ratliff.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

6. Consent Agenda

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- a. September 9, 2025, Council Meeting Minutes
- b. September 23, 2025, Payables \$539,509.87
- c. Progress Estimate No. 3 Second Street Roundabout Interwest Construction \$3,325.00

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the consent agenda while making a minor correction regarding the minutes. It was noted: Chief Mills should be referenced instead of "Ed" and "Motion Failed" should be changed to "Motion Passed."

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no

7. Department Head Reports

- a. Rob Omans, City Administrator
See attached report.
August 2025 Budget Report
See attached report.
- b. Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director
See attached report.
- c. Rich Albo, Police Chief
See attached report.

The Mayor expressed appreciation for the time and input provided by all involved in making uniformity and visibility of marked police vehicles a high priority.

It was noted that Chief Albo would continue to operate an unmarked vehicle.

- d. Amy Pridemore, Assistant Librarian
See attached report.

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Rob Omans, City Administrator, shared photos with the Council as part of the library presentation.

The Mayor thanked Amy Pridemore, Library Assistant, for her dedication and the time she puts into the program, noting that she consistently goes above and beyond. The Mayor also acknowledged Amy Pridemore, Library Assistant's passion for her work and her commitment to the community.

8. **Public Appearances – 15-Minute Limit**

a. Mel Babik - Kittitas Conservation Trust Hanson Pond Update

In 2018, the city requested assistance in addressing erosion issues in the area. The goals of the project included improving salmon habitat, improving infrastructure, improving flood plain connections and enhancing recreational opportunities.

One proposed solution, Alternative 3, involved completely removing the levee while maintaining existing infrastructure. However, technical advisors did not support Alternative 3, stating that the costs outweighed the benefits. Concerns were raised regarding floodplain protection and the integrity of existing infrastructure.

The Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) expressed a desire to step back from leading the project due to a lack of support from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and recognition of the risks involved. KCT issued a 30-day notice to dissolve the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The city will now look to explore creative solutions to address the outfall issues moving forward.

Councilmember Cook thanked KCT for all the work they have done on the project to date.

Design Link

b. Jordan Peterson, Downtown Association

See attached report.

Jordan Peterson attended the Rails-to-Trails event this morning, highlighting the extensive network of 3,700 miles of bike trails.

Updates on the Labor Mountain Fire are available through the Downtown Association,

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which has bulletin boards throughout town to provide current information to residents.

Jordan Peterson also noted the upcoming Places 2025 seminars and workshops scheduled to take place in Gig Harbor this year, where a local Cle Elum business will be honored. The event will recognize 49 Main Street communities selected for their achievements.

- c. Shasta Marion, Cle Elum Visitor Center

Stricken from the agenda.

9. **Business Requiring Public Hearings**

- a. Vaping & Smoking Paraphernalia Retail Emergency Moratorium - Colleda Monick, Planner

The Council received the attached staff report from Colleda Monick, City Planner, regarding the proposed moratorium. The purpose of the moratorium is to allow the city time to study and consider adoption of a resolution. Findings and facts already outlined in the original ordinance may be amended. The Council was asked to consider whether the moratorium should be modified or approved.

The Public Hearing opened at 7:51 p.m. and closed at 8:11 p.m.

Public Comments:

- Rhonda Holden expressed concerns related to the healthcare community about vaping and kratom, noting multiple patient overdoses from kratom and serious withdrawal consequences.
- Amy Bloodworth, a respiratory therapist, urged opposition to the proposed moratorium, citing concerns about treating lung conditions and the impact of vape stores on community health. She noted a significant drop in vaping since 2019 due to restrictions and expressed concern about the effect of vape shops on community identity and economic harm, especially to children and adults.
- Robert Markel, PA, spoke about the addiction and severe pulmonary health issues caused by vaping, emphasizing the high costs to the healthcare system and community, and opposed allowing a vape store.
- Dawn Bass, who works with young people at the Teen Center, opposed the opening of a vape shop across from the center, stating that such a presence normalizes vaping, increasing access, exposure, and risk among young people.
- Hillary Jensen, thanked the Council and the public for their stance. She opposed the vape shop in the downtown core and questioned the need for an exit clause in the

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lease with 509 Bake House, advocating for a cultural change in the downtown area.

- Holly Robbins expressed full support to the opposition of the vape shop, stating that all concerns had been thoroughly covered and emphasizing the importance of the community's voices.

Colleda Monick, City Planner provided clarifications as needed.

The Mayor and Council thanked everyone for sharing information and providing valuable insight on the topic to inform the Council and staff.

10. Unfinished Business

11. New Business

- a. Resolution 2025-020 Vaping & Smoking Paraphernalia Retail Moratorium - Colleda Monick, Planner

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-020, which formalizes the findings and facts and demonstrates the city's commitment to the matter: seconded by Councilmember Ratliff.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- b. Resolution 2025-019 Kittitas County Hazard Mitigation Plan - Colleda Monick, Planner

Colleda Monick, City Planner, presented information on the multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan developed over the past year in collaboration with various city departments. The plan allows the city to be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant funding and is updated every 5–7 years. Cle Elum has its own dedicated section within the overall plan.

Councilmember Harper noted that the draft resolution includes jurisdiction-specific language derived from the Kittitas County plan. The full plan is available on the Kittitas County website, with a direct link provided for Council and public access. Councilmember Harper emphasized that each jurisdiction contributes information relevant to their specific needs and noted that the resolution must be adopted in order to qualify for FEMA funding. He also clarified that the plan is a live document and can be updated as needed.

There were no indications of deficiencies. Multiple departments—including Public Works,

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Veolia, and Fire Chief Mills—participated in the process to identify their respective needs.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-019 related to the Kittitas County Hazard Mitigation Plan; seconded by Councilmember Malek.

MOTION CARRIED: 6 yes, 1 no. (Councilmember Ratliff)

- c. Bullfrog Flats - Memorandum of Understanding re: Water Rights - Ben Annen, HLA

See attached staff report

Council reviewed the proposed transfer of water rights from Blue Fern to the city of Cle Elum. It was noted that Blue Fern holds a surplus of water rights on an annual basis. According to data from the city's Water System Plan, the existing water rights are sufficient to support the Bullfrog Flats development under current planning assumptions and regulatory guidelines. Water demand has decreased over time, largely due to successful conservation efforts. Additionally, fire suppression needs have been accounted for by incorporating water typically reserved for firefighting into peak hour demand projections, ensuring an adequate and reliable supply. Council considered approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the transfer, which includes Exhibits A through D. The certification of the transfer will remain in effect indefinitely but is subject to review should there be any change in application or use.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper moved to authorize the Mayor to sign the MOU for the water rights transfer, including Exhibits A-D; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- d. Office of Firearm Safety & Violence Prevention Federal Grant - Rich Albo, Police Chief

The Police Department submitted its first federal grant application to support victim advocacy and public safety technology.

Listed below is what Chief Albo would be using the grant funds for:

- Current victim advocacy efforts that focus on DUI, theft, and domestic violence cases.
- Extending the existing Flock camera contract. No new cameras will be added in Cle Elum; however, one additional camera will be installed in Roslyn. The extended contract will cover five years and is already paid in full.
- Department computers need to be upgraded to efficiently run necessary software, particularly for video viewing and redaction.
- New AI-assisted redaction software, which allows frame-by-frame video redaction—especially effective for obscuring faces. This is expected to significantly

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reduce staff time spent on manual redactions.

- The AI tool serves as a support mechanism, not a replacement for human review. It includes an accuracy estimate and will still require a secondary review to ensure compliance and accuracy.
- Chief Albo also reported recent updates to less-lethal weapon legislation requiring the department to update its taser equipment accordingly.

Council discussed authorizing the Mayor to formally delegate approval authority to Chief Albo for project implementation and contract execution related to public safety and grant administration.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper moved to authorize the Mayor to delegate project and contract authority to Chief Albo; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- e. [Interlocal Aid Agreement Between the City of Cle Elum and Kittitas County Fire District #7 - Ed Mills, Fire Chief](#)

Chief Lowe requested an update to the existing inter-agency agreement, originally established in 2012, noting that while the agreement remains active, it is outdated. The proposed update is intended to clarify and reaffirm dual response areas between the involved agencies. Importantly, there are no changes to the current response protocols or assigned response units; the update is purely administrative to ensure the agreement accurately reflects current practices. Additionally, the amendment includes updated mailing addresses for both parties. Specifically, Amendment #20 requires the inclusion of addresses for District 7 and Cle Elum City Hall to ensure clarity and facilitate future correspondence.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook moved to authorize the Mayor to sign the updated agreement, with the mailing addresses included in Amendment #20; seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- f. [Cle Elum Municipal Airport Lease Cody Scriver - Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director](#)

The proposed airport lease item was stricken from the agenda. Council emphasized that the airport is a valuable city asset and, in light of the ongoing bankruptcy proceedings, determined that it would not be in the city's best interest to enter into a long-term lease of 25 years at this time. As a result, no action was taken, and the item was removed from consideration.

- g. [Labor Mountain Fire Camp Purchase Agreement - Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director](#)

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Council reviewed a proposed agreement with the Okanogan National Forest/USDA to provide potable water and accept gray water disposal in support of a temporary fire camp operation. The potable water would be used for shower facilities at the camp, and the resulting gray water would be properly disposed of through city services. This request is for a one-time, emergency-use scenario prompted by the ongoing wildfire situation.

Councilmember Harper noted that, while the city typically does not sell water for personal residential use outside the Urban Growth Area (UGA), it may provide water for construction purposes within the UGA. Although this agreement falls outside the UGA, it was deemed justifiable due to its role in public safety and emergency response, supporting fire suppression operations and protecting the community.

Councilmember Williams clarified that the water would not be drawn from the standard fill station but rather directly from a fire hydrant for emergency use.

Council considered authorizing the Mayor to sign the agreement with the USDA to provide potable water and gray water disposal services under these emergency circumstances.

MOTION: Councilmember Ratliff moved to approve the agreement with the USDA and Okanogan National Forest and authorize the Mayor to sign on behalf of the city; seconded by Councilmember Williams.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

h. Resolution 2025-021 Fee Schedule - Steven Cook, Councilmember

Council reviewed proposed edits to the city's fee schedule, focusing specifically on lodging tax and events committee applications. The updates include the addition or revision of application fees to better reflect the staff and consultant time required for processing. Proposed changes also align with existing and updated city code references, including those related to right-of-way (ROW) permits. The overall intent of the revisions is to ensure the fee schedule remains consistent with current code provisions and adequately covers administrative costs.

Council considered approving the updated fee schedule as presented.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook moved to approve the edits to the fee schedule, including updates to lodging tax and events committee application fees; seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

i. Kittitas County Public Facilities District Partnership Support - Mayor Lundh

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Council discussed a proposal to support the creation or continuation of a Kittitas County-wide Public Facilities District. The district would be established to maintain and develop public facilities throughout the county, using sustainable funding mechanisms. It would have the authority to utilize a voter-approved sales tax of up to 2%, along with other revenue tools, to fund these efforts. The initiative is intended to enhance recreational and other public facilities across the county.

Council considered a motion to support ongoing partnership discussions to explore the development of the Public Facilities District.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper moved to support partnership discussions to explore development of a Kittitas County Public Facilities District for the purpose of funding recreational facilities; seconded by Councilmember Ratliff.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

12. Report of Committees

a. Public Works & Community Development

Councilmember Ratliff attended the Hanson Pond review meeting and expressed concern regarding the proposal to fill in Hanson Ponds with dirt. He suggested that excavation could be confined within the pond area and that the worksite could be dewatered to better manage the project.

b. Public Safety & Health

Council discussed initiating the planning and development of larger projects related to emergency management, with a focus on long-term preparedness and infrastructure. They also considered support efforts tied to current grant opportunities that could help fund these initiatives.

Council agreed to schedule a study session dedicated to receiving updates from the Fire Department and reviewing fire-related bylaws.

c. Lodging Tax & Events

Councilmember Cook reported receiving an email from the Consolidated Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (CLTAC) regarding the review of applications scheduled for October.

d. General Government

There is a meeting tomorrow with a light agenda.

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- e. Coal Mines Trail

Nothing to report.

- f. Washington Collaborative Elected Leaders Institute (WA-CELI) - Mayor Lundh, Councilmembers Buechel-Curtis and Cook

The Council of Governments (COG) is an interlocal partnership focused on promoting economic development for municipalities and counties.

Councilmembers Buechle-Curtis, Cook, and Mayor Lundh have participated in classes offered through a collaborative institute led by the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and Washington State University (WSU). The institute is designed to address growing societal divides by promoting civil discourse and equipping participants with tools to conduct inclusive and respectful public meetings. Three in-person, two-day sessions were held in Spokane (July), Tacoma (August), and Richland (September), providing valuable networking opportunities with city leaders from across the state. Current projects include broad-scale civic engagement initiatives, along with targeted efforts to involve youth in local government. These efforts focus on developing mechanisms to encourage middle and high school students to participate in civic life and offer feedback, with outreach underway to various youth groups to better understand their interests and foster greater involvement.

13. Councilmember Comments - Limited to 5 Minutes

Councilmember Ratliff inquired whether the city Council could be informed about the identities of individuals submitting public records requests. It was confirmed that requester information is considered public and can be shared with the Council.

14. Mayor's Report

- The Douglas Munro Memorial Service is scheduled for Friday, September 26, 2025, at 11:00 AM at Laurel Hill Cemetery. The event is well attended by Coast Guard members and other distinguished guests.
- AWC District Meeting: The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Fall District Meeting for Kittitas and Yakima counties will be held on October 9 at 11:30 AM. Council is encouraged to attend for networking opportunities. Debbie Lee, Clerk, will forward the invitation to Council members.
- Swiftwater Learning Center: Alternative program students participated in job shadowing with the city of Cle Elum and Base Camp Books. They toured various city departments and learned about city operations.
- Labor Mountain Fire Update: Buechle-Curtis, Councilmember and Mayor Lundh visited the fire operating base, describing it as well-organized. It is a small city supporting 400–

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600 firefighters. The city is providing water support to the fire camp. The council thanked all involved for their excellent work.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.


Matthew Lundh, Mayor


Debbie Lee, Clerk