

CLE ELUM CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES
OCTOBER 14, 2025
6:00 PM
 119 W FIRST STREET
 CLE ELUM, WA 98922

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

Roll Call

Present:

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

- a. October 14, 2025, Sign In Sheet

2. Executive Session RCW 42.30.110(i) Potential Litigation

- a. Executive Session Script
- b. (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 will enter Executive Session at 6:02 p.m. for approximately 30 minutes to consult with legal counsel. Final action is expected to be taken following the Executive

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Session, with the council scheduled to return at 6:32 p.m.

3. **Public Comment – Limited to 5 Minutes**

Travis Harris, owner and operator of 509 Bakehouse, shared the background on his decision to lease part of his building to a smoke shop. His primary goal was to fill a vacant space, and due to limited leasing options, he selected the best candidate available at the time. He emphasized that he respects the opinions of the community and noted that the tenant has since approached him to terminate the lease. Harris reflected on the experience, and expressed hope to move forward with mutual respect. He remains committed to continuing his investment in the downtown area.

a. Lucy Temple Letter Re: Hanson Ponds

Lucy Temple commented that the city has abandoned the Hanson Ponds project and referred to an attached document for further details.

4. **Announcements, Appointments, Awards & Recognition**

5. **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of Ordinance 1709 and Ordinance 1710 as new items #6 and #7; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

6. **Ordinance 1709 Relating to the Public Health & Safety Emergency Moratorium on the Sale & Distribution of Kratom Within City Limits**

a. Ordinance 1709

Ordinance 1709 is an emergency ordinance by the City of Cle Elum placing a six-month moratorium on the sale and distribution of kratom within city limits. The ordinance sets a date for a public hearing, establishes fines for violations, and declares an emergency to protect public health and safety.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve Ordinance 1709; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

7. **Ordinance 1710 Lifting the Emergency Moratorium on Siting, Establishment, Licensing, and**

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Operation of New Retail Vape Products

a. [Ordinance 1710](#)

Ordinance 1710 is an ordinance by the City of Cle Elum lifting the emergency moratorium on new retail stores selling vaping products and smoking paraphernalia in the Downtown Commercial zone. It repeals Ordinance 1703 and Resolution 2025-020, includes provisions for corrections and severability, and sets an effective date.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Ordinance 1710; seconded by Councilmember Cook

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

Harper expressed support for the original intent of the ordinance. However, after conducting further research, he determined that it is not defensible under state law.

8. **Consent Agenda**

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve the consent agenda; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- a. [September 23, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes](#)
- b. [October 1, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes](#)
- c. [October 8, 2025, Cle Elum Council Special Meeting Minutes](#)
- d. [October 5, 2025, Payroll Vouchers \\$312,660.84](#)
- e. [October 14, 2025, Payables \\$1,135,336.85](#)
- f. [Ratifying Mayor Lundh's Signature on the Letter to the Department of Ecology and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - Re: Municipal Water Reliability & Storage](#)

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9. Department Head Reports

a. Rob Omans, City Administrator

See attached report.

b. Colleda Monick, Planner

See attached report.

Wildwood Ranch is currently revising its documents, and the responsibility now lies with the applicant. Once the updated materials are submitted, it will help the city determine the appropriate next steps.

c. Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director

See attached report.

Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director, informed the council that the proposed pole-mounted UV charging station will operate on a pay-to-charge basis. It features a retractable cord that moves up and down, helping to prevent theft and reduce damage. Signage will be installed to designate the stalls and allow parking in the right-of-way, in accordance with RCW regulations.

Councilmember Harper asked for an update on the graffiti issue at the Stafford Hill retaining wall. Bailey stated that different cleaning products have been ordered but are still on back order. Due to the wall's textured surface, pressure washing is not an option as it could cause damage. Public Works staff is continuing to search for a solvent that can effectively remove the paint without harming the surface.

d. Rich Albo, Police Chief

See attached report.

Parking issues on First Street are being addressed, and the police will begin enforcing regulations by targeting some of the problem vehicles.

e. Ed Mills, Fire Chief

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See attached report.

- f. William LaRue, Water/Wastewater Manager

See attached reports.

Mayor Lundh asked the Council if it would be acceptable to move agenda item 13B up for discussion at this time.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to move agenda item 13B up for discussion at this time; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

10. Public Appearances – 15-Minute Limit

- a. Cathy McMorris Rodgers Leadership Institute Flag Presentation - Kristina Sabestinas

Kristina Sabestinas, the Executive Director of the Cathy McMorris Rodgers Leadership Institute, was honored to present the City of Cle Elum with 50 American flags, reflecting a strong sense of civic pride. These flags serve as a visible reminder of the sacrifices made in the past and those to who serve in future generations. There is great anticipation of seeing the flags proudly flying along First Street.

- b. Transportation Benefit District (TBD) Presentation - Colleda Monick, Planner

Colleda Monick and Mike Heit from HLA gave a presentation explaining what a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) is. A TBD is created specifically for transportation-related projects and allows cities to collect revenue to fund these initiatives. Typically, the city council serves as the transportation board unless it formally assumes the powers of the board. As the board, the council would decide how the funds are used, such as matching grants, funding projects, or covering design costs. Of the total sales tax rate of 8.3%, with 6.5% going to the state, the city receives about 1%, which could potentially generate around \$200,000 per year for transportation projects. The city limits would define the boundary for revenue collection. Ordinance 1705 would establish the Transportation Benefit District.

The board would hold a meeting to decide on the revenue source, which could be either a 0.1% sales tax or a \$20 vehicle registration fee. If the council assumes the powers of the board, it would avoid the need for special meetings, as the council would act as the board. A public hearing date would be set to consider this assumption of powers, with meetings held by the Transportation Benefit District Board accordingly.

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11. Business Requiring Public Hearings

- a. Transportation Benefit District (TBD) - Colleda Monick, Planner

Ordinance 1705 Transportation Benefit District (TBD) - Colleda Monick, Planner

Mayor Lundh opened the public hearing on Ordinance 1705 at 7:43 p.m., and it was closed at 7:58 p.m. During the council comments, Councilmember Harper expressed concerns about the mechanism to increase taxes and questioned what the tax revenues would specifically be used for regarding roads. Harper asked what would happen if the city did not pursue a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) and instead relied on federal and state grants or internal efficiencies. He noted that impact fees are tied to growth and felt that establishing a TBD at this time was premature, stating his opposition to the proposal. He also pointed out that currently, funds come from the general fund to help maintain streets and apply for grants, with most sales tax paid by city residents.

Councilmember Buechle-Curtis explained that a TBD allows the city to earmark funds specifically for transportation projects, which is helpful when applying for matching grants. She noted that over 110 cities and towns in Washington use TBD's as a common way to generate revenue and emphasized the importance of protecting funds for roads.

Councilmember Williams noted that with population growth, the city may eventually become ineligible for certain grants and needs to explore alternative funding sources for projects.

Councilmember Cook stated that the TBD is a way to generate revenue to free up general fund dollars to pay off judgments, emphasizing that not establishing the TBD would not help the city's financial situation. He stressed that it shows the city is taking its financial responsibilities seriously.

Councilmember Ratliff voiced support for the ordinance, highlighting that a significant portion of revenue is paid by non-residents and that the TBD could make a meaningful difference for the city. It was noted that the TBD board could meet quickly to identify a revenue source to submit to the Department of Revenue, allowing a tax to take effect as early as January 1, 2026. It was also clarified that while the TBD can levy up to 3%, any increase beyond the initial rate would require voter approval; the board itself does not make that decision.

MOTION: Councilmember Williams made a motion to approve Ordinance 1705; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 6 yes 1 no. (Councilmember Harper)

- b. Levy Certification for 2026 Property Tax — Rob Omans, City Administrator

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Ordinance 1704–2026 Property Tax Levy - Rob Omans, City Administrator

The public hearing on the property tax levy was opened at 8:01 p.m. Rob Omans, City Administrator, explained that state law allows for a 1% increase in the property tax levy, which would result in approximately a \$9,000 increase for the year. The hearing was closed at 8:02 p.m. Councilmember Harper expressed concern that the 1% increase does not keep pace with inflation, viewing it as a maintenance-level adjustment rather than one that addresses rising costs. Councilmember Cook clarified that the property tax increase is based on assessed value and does not automatically increase by 1%. Instead, the 1% increase allows the city to capture the full amount of property taxes collected. A video was then played to provide further explanation regarding property tax collection.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Ordinance 1704; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

12. Unfinished Business

13. New Business

- a. Waste Water Treatment Plant Variable Frequency Drives (VFD) Replacement - William LaRue, Water/Wastewater Manager

William LaRue, Water Manager, explained that wastewater is directed to the treatment plant, where it first passes through a pump station and the headworks of the facility. The system includes four lift stations that operate in coordination with one another, depending on flow levels. Currently, one of the variable frequency drives has failed and needs to be replaced. The cost for the replacement is \$7,704.41, and funds are available in the regional fund to cover the expense. Staff is requesting authorization from the council to allow Veolia to proceed with the replacement.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the purchase of the Variable Frequency Drive; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

Councilmember Harper noted that the threshold for items requiring council approval is \$5,000.

- b. Ordinance 1708 Public Safety Sales and Use Tax - Curtis Chambers, City Attorney

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City Attorney Curtis Chambers explained that the legislature recently passed House Bill 2015, which authorizes cities to enact a 0.1% sales tax dedicated to criminal justice purposes. He noted that if the city chooses to pursue this option, the police department would work closely with the state to ensure compliance with all requirements.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve Ordinance 1708; seconded by Councilmember Williams.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- c. Progress Estimate #5 Stafford Ave. Corridor Improvements Final & Project Acceptance - Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director

Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director, presented the 5th progress estimate for the Stafford Roundabout project's final payment. Bailey, made a recommendation to approve payment and mark the project as complete.

MOTION: Councilmember Ratliff made a motion to approve Progress Estimate #5 Stafford Ave. Corridor Project and Accept the Project as Complete; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- d. Authorize Purchase of a Replacement Snowplow Dumptruck - Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director

Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director, reported the need to replace the city's current snow plow dump truck after metal shavings were found in the oil pan. According to the city's mechanic, Dave Lindseth, the truck is still operational but should be handled gently to avoid further damage. With that in mind, staff recommends replacing the vehicle before it fully breaks down. Repair estimates range from \$30,000 to \$50,000 for a basic engine rebuild, while a full engine replacement would be significantly more expensive. In addition, the truck's frame has severe corrosion and other mechanical issues, making replacement the more practical option.

After 3 weeks of comparison shopping, Bailey and staff identified a used vehicle that met the city's requirements—a truck from a county in Colorado with approximately 100,000 miles, priced at \$50,000. It is in good condition and comes as a functioning unit, with a lined bed that allows it to serve as both a dump truck and snow plow, similar to the current vehicle. If the specific vehicle is no longer available, staff would seek a similar option within the same price range. Transporting the truck via a delivery company is estimated to cost between \$6,000 and \$7,000. This is considered cost-effective compared to sending a staff member to retrieve it, which would involve airfare, hotel, trip permits, insurance, and per diem over a three-day period.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to authorize up to \$60,000 for the purchase and transport of the replacement truck; seconded by Councilmember Williams.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

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- e. [Resolution 2025-022 Surplus of Public Works Equipment, City Wide Desk Phones, Fax Machine, Phone Servers & Switches - Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director](#)

Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director, presented a project he has been working on for some time involving the surplus of various outdated or unused city equipment. The staff report outlines all the items and the reasons for declaring them surplus, including citywide phones, fax machines, and other obsolete equipment.

Councilmember Harper asked about data security, and Bailey confirmed that any machines containing sensitive data, such as the Shortell machine, would be completely wiped clean before being surplus. Regarding the water truck, Bailey noted that staff considered whether there was any reason to keep it; however, the Fire Chief confirmed there was no operational need for it.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-022; seconded by Councilmember Cook.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- f. [Request for Leak Adjustment Larissa Zep \\$202.64 - Ken Ratliff, Councilmember](#)

The leak was discovered and successfully repaired the following day.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Larissa Zep Request for Leak Adjustment as it met all the criteria; seconded by Councilmember Ratliff.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- g. [CEDA Placer Labs, Location Intelligence Software 2025 Lodging Tax Fund Application - Steven Cook, Councilmember](#)

Placer Lab is a tool used by the Cle Elum Downtown Association (CEDA) to gather location-based data. They just started using the application earlier this year and plan to continue its use moving forward. The current request is to continue the contract into next year, which is separate from the previous application.

MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the Placer Lab 2025 Lodging Tax Fund Application in the amount of \$11,479.80; seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- h. [2025 Pangrazi Nominations - Steven Cook, Councilmember](#)

The city received two separate nominations for the same individual and unanimously chose to present the Pangrazi Award to Bev Gonyea. Bev has been actively involved in various aspects of the community, including Rotary, community garden, teen center, and other local initiatives. Mayor Lundh, who has worked with Bev, noted that she truly embodies the spirit and intent of the Pangrazi Award through her dedication and service to the city.

The award will be formally presented at the November 25th, 2025 City Council meeting.

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MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve Bev Gonyea as the 2025 Pangrazi Award Recipient; seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

Bev Gonyea - Nominated by Jordan Peterson

Bev Gonyea - Nominated by Whitney Prosek

14. Report of Committees

a. Public Works & Community Development

Councilmember Cook reported that the Upper Kittitas County (UKC) baseball contract is nearing completion, and city attorney Curtis Chambers will present it to UKC's legal team for review. If there are no significant changes, the contract will be brought before the council for approval.

The Rotary Club continues to work on their proposal and plans for Flag Pole Park and will bring it back to the committee for further consideration.

The Indian John Rest Area project, which involves processing sewer and RV dumps, is currently under legal review and will be presented to the council once finalized.

b. Public Safety & Health

Councilmember Buechle-Curtis reported no major updates at this time. They will meet tomorrow for the regular meeting, followed by a study session at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the fire code.

c. Lodging Tax & Events

Councilmember Cook reported no new updates beyond what has already been discussed.

d. General Government

Councilmember Harper stated that he is currently waiting for input from legal.

e. Coal Mines Trail

Councilmember Malek attended a field trip with the commission to determine where signs will be placed along the Coal Mines Trail and will seek input from the commissioners on the plan.

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Councilmember Buechle-Curtis reported that the recent open house regarding the signage on the Coal Mines Trail was a great success. Buechle-Curtis stated that the Planning Commission is working on code amendments specifically related to non-conforming uses. These amendments address issues that arise when changes in the code cause certain properties to become non-conforming, which can make it difficult for owners to use or maintain their property. The goal is to create a clear path forward, outlining what property owners can and cannot do. Additionally, a brief introduction to the Comprehensive Plan is scheduled for next Tuesday. On the Kittcom front, Buechle-Curtis stated they are finalizing the budget and expects to receive the final information at the next meeting. Notably, Cle Elum's rates have decreased slightly.

15. Councilmember Comments - Limited to 5 Minutes

Councilmember Cook stated that COG will be having a discussion on water curtailment and will address the water challenges affecting many communities, promising to be an informative session.

Councilmember Ratliff added that there is more to the Hanson Ponds situation than previously shared; the latest proposal involves \$27 million for excavation work, and Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) has chosen to opt out.

Councilmember Cook also spoke about the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) and the public safety sales tax, emphasizing the importance of keeping the City Heights judgment at the forefront of everyone's attention.

16. Mayor's Report

Mayor Lundh reported that on Thursday, Councilmember Cook attended the District 4 AWC meeting. The meeting included representatives from Yakima, Grandview, Ellensburg, Spokane Valley, Selah, and Kittitas, and featured good conversation among attendees.

He also stated every registered voter should have received a postcard in the mail regarding a survey conducted by a survey company about revenue generation through taxes. All residents are strongly encouraged to complete the survey, as the results will help guide the city council in making decisions related to City Heights.

As a reminder to both the council and the public, a settlement conference between the City of Cle Elum and City Heights is scheduled for October 21. The goal of the meeting is to reach a mediated settlement and avoid full bankruptcy proceedings. Curtis Chambers, City Attorney, Mayor Lundh, Rob Omans, City Administrator and Councilmembers Harper, and Buechle - Curtis, and others will be attending the conference for the day.

17. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

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Matthew Lundh, Mayor



Debbie Lee, Clerk