

CLE ELUM CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES
JANUARY 13, 2026
6:00 PM
 119 W FIRST STREET
 CLE ELUM, WA 98922

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

Councilmembers Present:

Cassidy Buechle-Curtis
 Ken Ratliff
 Beth Williams
 Steven Harper
 Jon Cornelius
 Audrey Malek via zoom
 Steven Cook

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

Mayor Lundh officially welcomed Councilmember Cornelius.

- a. January 13, 2026, Sign In Sheet

2. Public Comment – Limited to 5 Minutes per Speaker

Brian Tate expressed concerns about Cle Elum and stated that he does not feel safe living in the city.

3. Elect Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Lundh explained that the process of electing a Mayor Pro Tem occurs every two years and stated his preference to use the more common term "Deputy Mayor." He noted that the City Code does not reference the title of Mayor Pro Tem, as it is instead addressed in Robert's Rules and the City's Rules and Procedures, and asked the Council how they wished to proceed. Councilmember Cook recommended making the change, while Councilmember Harper expressed concern that the term "deputy" could imply the position is an appointee, emphasizing that "pro tem" means serving in the Mayor's absence. Councilmember Williams read the definition of the word "deputy" for clarification. The Council agreed to change the title to Deputy Mayor.

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seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

In December, the representative of the Finance Committee had changed. Councilmember Harper felt that this change should be ratified and recommended that the Council endorse and formally ratify the previous Council's action regarding the Finance Committee, specifically concerning the single position on the committee.

MOTION: Councilmember Ratliff made a motion to ratify the previous council's appointment of the Finance Committee; seconded by Councilmember Harper.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

6. Consent Agenda

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

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

- a. Council Meeting Minutes — December 9, 2025
- b. Payables — December 23, 2025 — \$414,960.68
- c. Payables — December 30, 2025 — \$90,569.71
- d. Payables — January 13, 2026 — \$702,623.96
- e. Payroll Vouchers — January 5, 2026 — \$313,402.21
- f. Payroll Vouchers — Volunteer Fire 2025 Stipend — \$43,750.61
- g. Kittitas County — Emergency Medical Services — 2026 Payment Agreement
- h. Resolution 2026-001 — City Hall Surplus

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- e. Ed Mills — Fire Chief

See attached report.

- f. William LaRue — Water/Wastewater Manager

See attached report.

8. Public Appearances – 15-Minute Limit

9. Business Requiring Public Hearings

10. Unfinished Business

11. New Business

- a. Ordinance 1719 — Adding a New Chapter 8.70 — Prohibition of Sale and Distribution of Kratom — Rob Omans — City Administrator

City Administrator Rob Omans presented Ordinance 1719 to the Council for consideration, with the accompanying staff report providing background on the ordinance. The ordinance has already been reviewed by city legal.

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Ordinance 1719; seconded by Councilmember Williams.

MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.

Councilmember Cook commented that the ordinance, which imposes a total ban on all forms of kratom—whether natural or refined—was somewhat broad and that he felt uncomfortable with such a sweeping approach. Nevertheless, he stated he would vote in favor and expressed hope that the legislature would consider more nuanced legislation regarding its legality.

- b. Ordinance 1720 — Terminating the Emergency Moratorium on the Sale and Distribution of Kratom — Rob Omans — City Administrator

MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Ordinance 1720; seconded by Councilmember Williams.

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The January meeting was canceled.

13. Councilmember Comments - Limited to 5 Minutes

The Council of Government (COG) discussed plans for moving forward with hiring an Executive Director for Economic Development and intends to meet on a weekly basis to advance the process. The Executive Director will oversee all work related to the joint economic partnership. COG is involved because the new hire will be an employee of COG, not the county, reflecting the partnership between municipalities.

Buechle-Curtis reported that the county is working on a five-year plan for homelessness and affordable housing, emphasizing the importance of increased partnerships with local organizations. The draft homelessness and affordable housing plan will be sent to the clerk for distribution.

Buechle-Curtis also attended the Fire Advisory Board meeting to gain a better understanding of their initiatives, including online training for volunteers to help build credentials. Levy planning will be a topic of discussion, and the council expressed support for authorizing the mayor to arrange a joint meeting regarding fire consolidation.

Cornelius expressed appreciation for the welcome and looks forward to collaborating with everyone, noting that meetings with eight small businesses have provided valuable insights into public expectations for the council.

14. Mayor's Report

- Bankruptcy negotiations are ongoing, with the objection deadline on February 28, 2026, and the plan of adjustment filing on May 5, 2026.
- The council handbook rules of procedure may benefit from a review, and he will appoint a special committee to examine it over the coming months.
- Congratulations to Buechle-Curtis for being selected to represent small cities on the AWC advisory committee.
- The Mayor will serve on the upcoming interview panel for the Assistant City Administrator position, and thanks were extended to Rob Omans, Gary Berndt, Audrey Malek and Siw Bay - Hanson, who will be on the interview committee as well.
- The City Newsletter, "Cle Elum Connector," will transition to the new Assistant City Administrator, once hired, and has received positive citizen feedback.
- The "Meet the Mayor" series offers casual sessions in the morning and evening for public participation.
- City Action Days are next week, with Councilmembers Buechle-Curtis, Cook, and Cornelius participating; registration closes Friday.
- Chief Albo and William LaRue are offering tours and ride-alongs, and Public Works encourages council involvement with all department heads.
- The Certificate of Municipal Leadership program is highly encouraged by all council members as a valuable learning opportunity, for Councilmember Buechle-Curtis has achieved this certification, and the Mayor hopes all council members will pursue it.