

**CLE ELUM CITY COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES**  
**FEBRUARY 24, 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  
 Steven Cook

**Staff Present:**

Matthew Lundh - Mayor  
 Rob Omans - City Administrator  
 Debbie Lee - Clerk  
 Mathew Bailey - Public Works Director  
 Rich Albo - Police Chief  
 Erica Krum - Assistant City Administrator

- a. February 24, 2026, Sign In Sheet

**2. Public Comment – Limited to 5 Minutes per Speaker**

Bonnie Reay has a complaint regarding survey stakes placed on her property and requests clarification on this issue.

Brian Tate has reported concerns about perceived incompetence related to the city's contracted personnel.

Anthony Gary, representing the Yakima Heart Safe Initiative, expresses gratitude for the city's services and will meet with staff to discuss potential locations for public access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs).

Robert Greenman inquires about the recent increase in the water, sewer and garbage utility bill.

**3. Announcements, Appointments, Awards, and Recognition**

Mayor Lundh informed the Council that the city lost two very important people from the community; Jim Leonard, former Public Works Director, and Sam Krahenbuhl, former Cle Elum

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Police Chief, have passed away.

Chief Albo stated Sam treated the community great. He started in 1971 and became a chief in 1972. He did a lot for the community, and he also was a Cle Elum High School graduate and was a Veteran. Chief Albo had the honor of escorting Sam Krahenbuhl to Johnston and Williams Funeral Home in Ellensburg along with assistance from the Ellensburg Police Department.

Mayor Lundh, when campaigning for his upcoming election, visited with Sam and left 90 minutes later. Both men will be honored at a later date.

Mayor Lundh welcomed Erica Krum, Assistant City Administrator, to the team.

**4. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

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

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

**5. Consent Agenda**

**MOTION: Councilmember Cook made a motion to approve the consent agenda removing item c and moving it to New Business item e; seconded by Councilmember Harper.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

- a. Council Meeting Minutes — February 10, 2026
- b. Payables — February 24, 2026 — \$241,920.23
- c. Progress Estimate No. 2 — N. Montgomery Ave. Watermain Improvements — Flowline \$7,098.46

**6. Department Head Reports**

- a. Rob Omans — City Administrator

See attached report.

January 2026 — Budget and Treasurer's Report

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b. Mathew Bailey — Public Works Director

See attached report.

Mathew Bailey, Public Works Director, reported that the sulfur smell identified by residents on Third Street is associated with coal mine water runoff, not a sewer issue.

It was requested that Public Works provide notice to nearby residents prior to any jetting work on the sewer lines that may impact them.

c. Rich Albo — Police Chief

See attached report.

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

8. **Business Requiring Public Hearings**

9. **Unfinished Business**

10. **New Business**

a. Resolution 2026-007 — Employee Handbook — Pre-Employment Policy — Rob Omans — City Administrator

Rob Omans, City Administrator, presented an update to the Employee Handbook regarding the Pre-Employment Policy, which was previously overlooked. It is proposed to add the policy to the end of the Employee Handbook, addressing consumer background check procedures, data collection for background checks, consumer reporting, and education verification. This addition will also allow for flexibility to accommodate future changes in consumer laws.

**MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-007 Pre-Employment Policy; seconded by Councilmember Cook.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

b. Resolution 2026-008 — Interfund Loan — Rob Omans — City Administrator

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Rob Omans, City Administrator, reflected that he has worked for the city for 19 years without encountering the current issue. The general fund has a low balance, attributed to a fund balance cash flow concern rather than cash or budget constraints. If the situation persists into next month, the fund risks going negative while awaiting property tax and sales tax revenues for recovery. Auditors recommended borrowing from a fund with interest to address this issue.

The city expected \$100,000 in reimbursements, now unavailable due to pre-mediated lawsuits concerning unpaid debts under mediation, which the city could not control.

A recommendation for \$300,000 was made, including an initial funding amendment of \$150,000, with any excess subject to finance committee review. The proposed payback duration was shortened to one year, while an 18-month duration was also discussed.

Council Member Cornelius expressed concerns regarding the funds' transfer timeframe and reimbursement triggers, noting that sales tax and property tax revenues would serve as a financial buffer.

A review of expenses from February, March, and April of the previous year suggested a potential payback within a year, allowing for reassessment. There was a recognition of the required amount and interest access, with the need for flexibility for the finance director.

Concerns were raised regarding dependence on sales tax revenue, particularly with reduced expectations from business owners attributed to the lack of snow; however, ongoing building projects in the Bullfrog Flats area were noted as providing some assurance for sales tax revenue.

Additionally, a request was made to call for an executive session to discuss one item.

Mayor Lundh, informed and thanked the Council for allowing a brief pause to call the attorney.

Councilmember Harper withdrew his request to have an Executive Session for Resolution 2026-008.

Councilmember Harper will email revised language regarding the resolution.

Documentation from staff is needed to justify the release of additional funds, if necessary.

Concerns expressed regarding the adequacy of time and the initial amount of \$150,000 to ensure the city can meet its financial obligations. Trust in those managing the budget to make informed decisions.

**MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-008 with the amended language Section 2. Loan Authorized. A loan in the aggregate amount not to exceed \$300,000 is hereby authorized from the Sewer Fund to the**

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**General Fund. The loan may be funded through one or more advances; provided, however, that the initial advance(s) shall be limited to an aggregate amount not to exceed \$150,000. Any additional advances beyond the initial \$150,000 shall require separate re-approval by the City Council based on updated financial reports demonstrating continued need, repayment feasibility, and sufficient excess cash in the Sewer Fund. The loan shall be repaid from available revenues or other available sources, within 18 months from the date each advance is made. The outstanding principal amount of the loan shall bear interest at a per annum rate equal to the net earnings of the City's internal investment portfolio until repayment of the loan in full. There is no penalty for prepayment. If repayment of any advance is not on schedule (as measured by the repayment plan established at the time of each advance), no further inter-fund loans from the Sewer Fund (or any other enterprise fund) to the General Fund shall be authorized for a period of twelve (12) months following the date of default or delinquency; seconded by Councilmember Ratliff.**

**MOTION FAILED: 2 yes 5 no (Councilmember Williams, Buechle-Curtis, Malek, Cornelius, and Cook).**

**MOTION: Councilmember Williams made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-008 Interfund Loan as originally presented; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 yes 2 no (Councilmember Harper and Ratliff)**

- c. Northern Kittitas County Historical Society — 2026 Night at the Museum — Lodging Tax Application

Councilmember Malek informed the Council that the initial request was for \$11,795.00. An adjustment was made to exclude the nine-month salary of the Program Coordinator. The Lodging Tax & Events Committee recommends approval for the revised amount of \$7,295.00.

**MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve the 2026 Night at the Museum Lodging Tax Application in the amount of \$7,295.00; seconded by Councilmember Cook.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

- d. Pioneer Queen Coronation Committee — 2026 Meet & Greet — Lodging Tax Application

Councilmember Malek informed the Council that, traditionally, the committee has not approved expenditures for refreshments, gifts, flowers, crowns, and the dress. This would reduce the original request from \$3,760.00 to \$2,700.00. The Lodging Tax & Events Committee recommends that the Council approve this request.

**MOTION: Councilmember Harper made a motion to approve the 2026 Pioneer Queen Meet & Greet Lodging Tax Application in the amount of \$2,700.00; seconded by Councilmember Williams.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

- e. Resolution 2026-004 — Removal of Certain Items from the Inventory List — City Hall and Public Works

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**MOTION: Councilmember Ratliff made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-004 Removal of Certain Items from the Inventory List; seconded by Councilmember Buechle-Curtis.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 yes 0 no.**

**11. Report of Committees**

a. Public Works & Community Development

Councilmember Cook stated the next meeting is one week from tomorrow.

b. Public Safety & Health

Councilmember Buechle-Curtis announced that the Public Safety & Health Committee will convene an additional meeting to discuss progress on graffiti initiatives and will present the findings to the Council shortly.

c. Lodging Tax & Events

Councilmember Malek stated the logo used on the lodging tax mailers was discussed in relation to a conversation with Amy McGuffin regarding the history of the logo. Consideration was given to the marketing strategy of "Discover Cle Elum" and whether there is interest in switching to the city seal.

d. General Government

Councilmember Harper stated that four sections of the code are designated as obsolete and are currently under legal review.

e. Coal Mines Trail

Councilmember Malek stated there is a meeting scheduled for next week.

**12. Councilmember Comments - Limited to 5 Minutes**

The Council of Government's (COG) last meeting was lengthy and addressed numerous critical topics:

- Citing the university's active role in economic development strategy, COG approved a letter to the Board of Trustees in support of the Central Washington University (CWU) president in response to a vote of no confidence by faculty.

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- Hiring process for the executive director of the economic development partnership. A special meeting was scheduled for further discussion on desired qualifications and to provide direction to the hiring committee to advance the process.
- Funding of \$1.5 million was approved for the City of Roslyn for the replacement and repair of clear wells.

### Other Comments Include:

- Kittitas County Emergency Medical System (EMS) plans to meet in two months in Ellensburg to discuss training practices and medical protocols for the county.
- Councilmember Cook will attend an online Association of Washington Cities (AWC) short course on public planning.
- Garbage and sewer rates were reviewed by the Public Works and Community Development Committee and the Council. Garbage rates had been subsidized by reserves for the past five years, leading to a recent increase, a decision acknowledged as difficult. Sewer rates were codified two years ago, with increases built in for available funds to be used for repairs and maintenance. The Council is aware of the impact of these decisions.
- Councilmember Buechle-Curtis announced a county-wide veteran resource event on April 18, from 1:00 –2:00 p.m.
- Councilmember Buechle-Curtis and Erica Krum, Assistant City Administrator, attended a session with the Department of Commerce, which provided an opportunity to meet the new representative and learn about available resources. Our community faces challenges with affordability, and support resources are available for those in need.
- It was announced that the city does not set energy rates; however, a 12–13% rate increase is anticipated effective January 1, 2026, mainly due to smart meters.
- Councilmember Harper noted a Municipal Research Small Cities (MRSC) training scheduled for March 26, 2026, from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m., for which credits will be earned (Debbie Lee, Clerk, will send an email regarding both trainings).
- Councilmember Ratliff reported on the sewer lining project in the alleyway, mentioning that some areas require more than lining and need actual repairs. Notifications will be distributed to affected residents.
- Councilmember Malek and Amy McGuffin, Chamber of Commerce are collaborating with the Department of Commerce on a potential grant for emergency preparedness in light of summer and wildfire risks, with further information to follow.
- Councilmember Ratliff praised the current leadership of the city, noting that the Mayor and staff are performing very well.

### 13. Mayor's Report

Mayor Lundh met with Kim Schrier, the legislative director in Washington, D.C. to discuss available funding for local projects and recent successes in securing funding. Focus areas included the design and transmission line for Zone 3 water main passage as part of the bipartisan Housing Road Act, aimed at addressing the housing crisis. On another note discussions included the impact

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of social media on children, with ongoing efforts to draft related legislation. A return visit is planned in two weeks for the congressional conference.

Registration is now open for the AWC Annual Conference in Spokane from June 23–26.

There are openings on the Planning, Historic, and Civil Service Commissions; applications are encouraged.

Mayor Lundh reminded everyone of the meeting on Thursday at the school regarding online predators. This is a free event.

**14. Executive Session RCW 42.30.110(g)**

- a. RCW 42.30.110(g) To evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee.

8:29 p.m. 15 minutes not expected to make a decision.

- b. February 24, 2026, Executive Session Script

**15. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. with no decisions being made.

  
Matthew Lundh, Mayor

  
Debbie Lee, Clerk