

CITY OF GEARHART  
Regular Meeting of the City Council  
Wednesday, January 7, 2026  
6:00 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

A regular meeting of the Gearhart City Council was held Wednesday, January 7, 2026. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone.

Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Paulina Cockrum, Councilor Preston Devereaux, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Sharon Kloepper, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Interim City Attorney Chad Jacobs, Fire Chief Josh Como, Police Chief Josh Gregory, Police Officer Jeremiah Mares, Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker, and City Treasurer Justine Hill. A quorum of the Council was present.

At 6:11 pm Mayor Smith called to order the regular meeting of the Council. There were no conflicts of interest declared by any member of the Council.

Approve Minutes.

- ON MOTION by Councilor Cockrum, 2nd by Councilor Kloepper to approve minutes of the November 24, 2025 worksession, MOTION was approved 5 yeas (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Kloepper, Smith) - 0 nays.
- ON MOTION by Councilor Cockrum, 2nd by Councilor Gould to approve minutes of the December 3, 2025 regular meeting of the Council as amended (*duplicate sentence*), MOTION was approved 5 yeas (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Kloepper, Smith) - 0 nays.

Mayor Smith inquired if there were any questions on the Planning Commission minutes in the Councilors' packets. There were none.

Mayor's Report. Mayor Smith reported there have been meetings.

Councilor Reports.

- Councilor Devereaux had nothing new to report.
- Councilor Gould plans on attending the LOC Small Cities meeting in February. She mentioned that the Small Business Development Center was advertising for a small business management course through Clatsop Community College. She noted scholarships may be available. She also mentioned an "After Hours" Chamber event being hosted in Gearhart.

- Councilor Cockrum spent the last month recovering from surgery. She shared a document (*Goals for the City of Gearhart April 1992*), which was created by a committee of citizens. She explained it had LCDC goals and thoughts on what the City should be looking to do. She felt in many ways it was still relevant.
- Councilor Kloefer reported that she met with Spencer Kyle, Seaside's City Manager, about the interest in merging fire departments. She felt there were two salient points: 1) there was no impetus at this time; and 2) there would be required conditions that Gearhart would have to meet (e.g., new fire facility).

#### City Officer Reports.

- Chief of Police. Police Chief Gregory thanked the Council for allowing the police department to purchase new laptop computers. He noted that there will be some changes in the statistical data provided due to the implementation of the new Central Square software. He noted that the new report shows everything as a call for service. He indicated that the department was busy with only three officers. He mentioned that Officer Mares participated in the "Shop with a Cop" event. He also indicated that he and Sergeant Brown will be attending an executive leadership training seminar. Councilor Kloefer requested additional clarification on the animal category of the police report and inquired if the traffic stop category could be broken down further (e.g., citations). Councilor Gould gave a commendation on the good judgement that Chief Gregory made during a recent law enforcement pursuit.
- Fire Chief. Fire Chief Como explained that the fire department has been unable to provide a monthly log breakdown; however, they provided summary data. He noted it was due to a new mandatory reporting system implemented January 1. He went over the department's data report, including a call breakdown, mutual aid, and comparisons to last year. He noted that Cannon Beach, who regularly assists Hamlet and Elsie areas, was still behind the number of Gearhart calls. He mentioned that Astoria, Seaside, and Cannon Beach have paid 24/7 firefighters. He complimented his department for doing a great job. He indicated he would have his annual report as soon as he can pull the data.
- City Treasurer. Financial reports were submitted in the Councilors' packets. She reported noteworthy revenues in City Business License, which is due to the City's annual Business License renewal process; and in Conflagration/Mobilization, which was for the final outstanding reimbursement payment for Hood to Coast mobilization assistance. She reported noteworthy expenditures: a payment to Beery Elsner & Hammond for legal services, which represents services that had been rendered since July 1, but that BEH's billing system had inadvertently put a "hold" on; regular software renewals to CivicPlus and Adobe; a payment in

police Purchased Services to the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office for the City's regular patrol assistance agreement, which represents services provided for the months of July through November; regular quarterly payment to the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Association in Gas & Clothing Maintenance; a transfer from the General Fund (expenditure) to the Building department (revenue); and payment to Caselle for new court software, which was due to the transition of the police department to new Countywide software. She talked about new payroll rates for 2026 and the release of PERS employer advisory rates for the 2027 to 2029 fiscal years. Treasurer Hill noted that the City's auditors would be providing a brief discussion on the City's audit.

- City Attorney. Interim City Attorney Jacobs had nothing new to report. He wished everyone a Happy New Year.
- City Administrator. Administrator Sweet's report was sent to the Councilors in their packets. He reported that he has been working with FFA Architecture and Interiors in terms of the Public Safety Building potential remodel project. He indicated they have put together a timeline that will allow a May ballot option. He has been continuing to work on the bench placement project. He mentioned that staff have been working on recurring flooding and drainage issues. He noted that Public Works Director Mark McFadden has been working with engineers on the Gearhart Loop project. Administrator Sweet indicated there have been multiple tree permits with no violations. He mentioned that the sidewalk project on Pacific Way was underway. Other items he noted were participating in the Water Caucus; City Hall closure for Martin Luther King Day; a worksession (maybe two) in January; continuing with the street vacation process; and updating Gearhart zone codes with the FEMA/PICM changes. He gave a shout-out to Mark McFadden for providing support during his recent health emergency.

#### Visitors.

Gearhart Police Officer Jeremiah Mares - Gearhart PD K-9 Unit. Officer Mares gave a presentation on the opportunity for Gearhart to participate in a K-9 program. His presentation included: Introduction; Executive Summary; Why a K-9 Unit?; History & Effectiveness of Police K-9s; Gearhart's Current Utilization & Needs; Handler Selection Process; Proposed K-9 Functions; Potential Vendors; Budget Overview; Equipment Breakdown; Insurance & Liability; Cost-Saving Measures; Grant Opportunities; Regional Mutual Aid; and Next Steps: Council Approval. He distributed an agenda and letters of support to the Council.

- Several Councilors requested additional information before moving forward with the program. There were no decisions made on the K-9 program until additional clarification could be provided to the Council.

Accuity LLC - Annual Audit. Kori Sarret, CPA, Accuity LLC, indicated that there were no audit adjustments, which she noted was a good thing because it indicates that the Council has been receiving valid, accurate data. Accuity staff are required to review Oregon minimum standards and public procurement rules, and the City is in compliance. She also mentioned fixed assets, governmental funds, capital outlay, and long-term debt. She noted the water funds showed a loss and that the City has been taking corrective action with adjusting water user rates. She commended City staff for their work.

Kevin Leahy - CEDR Update Presentation. Kevin Leahy, Executive Director/Associate Vice President, Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR), gave a presentation on his organization. The presentation included: Year in Review; CEDR 2025-2026 Budget; CEDR Members; Clatsop Job & Career Fair; CEDR Awards; 2025-2030 Strategic Plan Framework; Community Education & Professional Development; SBDC Oregon Statistical Data; SBDC Opportunities; SBDC Award; and Clatsop WORKS program. Councilor Gould noted that the CEDR program does support local Gearhart businesses; as well as, improves the overall quality of life by supporting surrounding business communities.

Public Communications - Written & Oral. Mayor Smith read the oral public comment statement on the agenda. There was late correspondence submitted by Tim Mancill (Regarding Ordinance 951 - Amending Contractor Work Hour Ordinance) and Jack Zimmerman (Testimonial).

- Tom Thies (PO Box 2831, Gearhart) thanked the City Council for their work. He felt it was important to note that the Council members were put in their positions by majority vote. He used a bridge metaphor to correlate the pillars of a bridge and how they relate to the local communities fire departments (Warrenton, Gearhart, Seaside, Cannon Beach). He noted that without one of the pillars, the bridge would not be functional. He was afraid that if one pillar was not able to carry its weight, the entire bridge would be in jeopardy. He felt that Gearhart fire department does not have enough support. He acknowledged Councilor Kloepper's comments on Seaside not being interested in merging and felt that the Seaside community would not appreciate Gearhart residents voting on their fire department. He felt uncertain about what may happen with the Gearhart fire department. He felt that Gearhart has a great volunteer fire staff and needed support.
- Jack Zimmerman (PO Box 2480, Gearhart) summarized testimonial correspondence that he submitted to the Council because of commentary and an outcry from social media in regard to the Public Safety Building (PSB) survey. He explained that the City Administrator

misrepresented the PSB survey results by falsely claiming public frustration with social media misinformation when no such theme appears in the survey's written comments. He felt that the overwhelming and consistent message in the survey comments were a deep lack of trust in the survey, the survey process, and City leadership. He felt that residents cited bias, factual errors, fear of retaliation, and a disregard for voter input. He indicated that many of the people who responded felt fearful that the City Council would never address the survey results. He felt that the number of responses was a clear indication that the residents deserved a response. He felt the comments were very critical. He noted that the town was made up of some very competent, knowledgeable, successful people with deep life experiences. He felt that the community needed an honest and balanced process. He indicated that the City Council was responsible for the PSB, not social media. He noted the results were not about false narratives on social media. He encouraged the Council to stop looking at social media as a demon and embrace it. He felt the City should work towards their 2022 goal of bringing both sides of the equation together because it never happened.

#### Ordinances/Resolutions.

Ordinance 951 - An Ordinance Amending Named Sections of Ordinance #930 Known as the Contractor Work Hour Ordinance. Mayor Smith noted the red line version in the Councilors' packets. Administrator Sweet went over the staff report.

- Ordinance 951 died on the floor due to a lack of a MOTION.
- ON MOTION by Councilor Cockrum, 2nd by Councilor Gould to repeal Ordinance 930 known as the Contractor Work Hour Ordinance and instead review the existing Noise Ordinance in Gearhart's Municipal Code, MOTION was approved 4 yeas (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Smith) - 1 nay (Kloepfer).
- There was discussion before the vote. Councilor Kloepfer requested clarification from Police Chief Gregory on enforcing the red line version of the Ordinance. He felt that it would be easier to enforce a noise situation, which can be clearly defined by a decibel device. He felt it may be an opportunity to clean up some enforcement issues related to contractors. Councilor Kloepfer offered a scenario where a neighbor was using a power tool and by the time the police were able to respond, the work was complete. Police Chief Gregory indicated that type of situation requires officer discretion, and may be an opportunity for educating and/or warning the potential noise violator. Councilor Kloepfer and Councilor Gould requested clarification on Council Cockrum's proposed motion. There was additional conversation on homeowners versus contractors and enforcement. It was clarified that the motion eliminated the Contractor Work Hour

Ordinance and enforcement of contactor noise would be done through the City's Noise Ordinance. Councilor Cockrum would like to meet and review the Noise Ordinance with Police Chief Gregory.

Old Business. None.

New Business.

Liquor License Application Review - Prep Kitchen. The Mayor opened the new business item. Administrator Sweet went over the staff report and clarified the application was for a full-time liquor license. He noted that he recommended City Council approve the Prep Kitchen liquor license application with a simple motion. He clarified the business was in a C-2 zone and that there were other surrounding businesses that had similar licenses. Administrator Sweet noted that Joshua Money, Prep Kitchen, was also available to answer any questions.

- ON MOTION by Councilor Gould, 2nd by Councilor Devereaux to approve the Prep Kitchen's liquor license application with a favorable recommendation, MOTION was approved 5 yeas (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Kloepper, Smith) - 0 nays.
- There was some discussion. Councilor Cockrum questioned the need for a grab-and-go establishment to have the need for a full liquor license. Prep Kitchen Money clarified that their intention was not to create a bar, but rather have the opportunity to serve alcohol at special dining events (e.g., Saturday brunch) without having to get a special liquor license each time.

Audit Compliance. Mayor opened the topic and Administrator Sweet went over the staff report. He explained that in smaller organizations where employees have many roles and limited resources, the City's organizational structure was a common finding.

- By consensus the City Council acknowledged the reported audit deficiency of "Organizational Structure" and approved internal control to assist in providing reasonable assurance of compliance, transparency, and prevention of fraud (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Kloepper, Smith) - 0 nays.

Council Concerns.

- Councilor Kloepper reported no concerns.
- Councilor Cockrum expressed concern about the upcoming budget cycle and the City's sources of revenue. She requested additional information on how to deal with that issue, including potentially putting a discussion group together.

- Councilor Gould thanked Mayor Smith for his beginning of the year message that was blogged out. She shared similar concerns to Councilor Cockrum and fears that costs are outpacing revenues. She mentioned that she has been through a lot of leadership development classes in her career. In her training, she was exposed to an analogy about different leadership styles using the movie “Band of Brothers,” in which one of the incompetent leaders got bogged down in the little details. She felt it was important to avoid this type of leadership style and appreciated the Council not getting bogged down in the minutiae.
- Councilor Devereaux agreed that the City needed to focus on their finances and try to increase revenues. Although he was once opposed to short-term rentals, he now felt that regulated short-term rentals may be a viable income source for the City.
- Mayor Smith reported no concerns.

#### Adjournment.

- ON MOTION by Councilor Gould, 2nd by Councilor Devereaux to adjourn the meeting, MOTION was approved 5 yeas (Cockrum, Devereaux, Gould, Kloepper, Smith) - 0 nays. Mayor Smith adjourned the regular Council meeting at 8:22 pm.

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Mayor Kerry Smith

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Chad Sweet, City Administrator