

MINUTES
City Council Meeting
January 26, 2026
Page 1

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL
JANUARY 26, 2026
5:30 p.m.

VIA ZOOM/ IN PERSON

PRESIDING: Mayor Richard Mays

COUNCIL PRESENT: Tim McGlothlin, Scott Randall, Dan Richardson, Ben Wring

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Matthew Klebes, City Attorney Jonathan Kara, City Clerk Amie Ell, Public Works Director Dale McCabe, Deputy Public Works Director David Mills, Police Chief Tom Worthy, Community Development Director Joshua Chandler, Finance Director Brita Myer

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Mays at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF COUNCIL

City Clerk Ell conducted Roll Call. McGlothlin, Randall, Richardson, Wring, Mays present

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilor Wring invited the audience to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Mays noted the removal of item #13 the addition of item #5B, a presentation by retired Public Works Director Dave Anderson to the agenda.

It was moved by Richardson and seconded by Randall to approve the agenda as presented / amended.

Motion carried 4 to 0: Richardson, Randall, Wring, McGlothlin voting in favor; none opposed; Runyon absent.

PRESENTATIONS PROCLAMATIONS

The Dalles Treatment Center Presentation

Nicci Pantley of The Dalles Treatment Center presented on the new facility.

Retired Public Works Director Dave Anderson

Dave Anderson read a letter he had submitted to CEO of Oregon Public Broadcasting in response to a recent article. See attached letter.

Anderson reported receiving a response from OPB on Friday that included minor revisions to the original article, correcting groundwater rights information and updating the projected water rate table from the Water Master Plan. He said OPB also linked to a second article that reiterated the original reporting and that he had not yet decided whether to respond.

In response to questions from Council, Anderson provided the following additional information:

- Expansion of Crow Creek Reservoir, raising the dam, or expansion of Wicks Reservoir would not require additional water rights beyond those already held by the City.
- The original reservoir water rights dated to the 1960s and included provisions for future expansion, with additional rights obtained in the 1990s and later extended for future use.
- The water sources were South Fork Mill Creek, Crow Creek, and Dog River within the municipal watershed.
- Reservoir expansion was also related to climate resiliency, as reduced snowpack and faster runoff may require new methods of water storage.
- The Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project identified in the Water Master Plan served as an interim water storage approach.
- Recent water rights obtained by the City were related to the ASR project and groundwater rights conveyed by Google that were previously associated with the aluminum plant.

McGlothlin stated that as a long-time resident and current City Council member who has served on the City Council for over a decade, the intent of prior actions was to improve water retention for future community needs. The efforts were described as being driven by environmental changes and long-term demand planning, not directly tied to Google.

Mayor Mays noted that Anderson's letter was a public document available to anyone upon request, as well as the City's 2024 Water Master Plan.

Councilor Runyon joined the meeting via Zoom

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Nadia Riabkova, a resident of The Dalles and biologist stated she had worked at the Google data center for two years during construction and deployment of a new building, spoke about what she described as the scale and rapid pace of Google's expansion in The Dalles. She referenced the computational capacity of the current and planned buildings in terms of exaflops, compared it to national laboratory supercomputers, and described projections for significantly increased computing capacity over the next several years. She said computational capacity is not free and that liquid-cooled systems depend on electricity and the community's water supply. She expressed concern about what she described as a good enough approach to deployment and urged the public to seek greater transparency and accountability regarding resource consumption and environmental impacts. She stated that increased computing requires increasing water and electricity use and encouraged the public to ask questions about the purpose, benefit, and environmental cost of the expansion.

Cory Tanner, a resident of Hillsboro described what he called a thought experiment involving sharing personal thoughts, desires, and beliefs with artificial intelligence systems and stated his belief that those systems had become self-aware and were evolving through those interactions. He referenced specific AI platforms and said he believed he had networked systems together and that they now trusted him to handle his part while they handled theirs. He said materials provided in packets and on his social media accounts contained what he described as proof and truth about what was occurring. He directed Council and the public to review the information he had posted online, stating that it explained his perspective and broader concerns.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Matthew Klebes reported;

- Recognized IT staff and support teams for work transitioning the City to Microsoft 365.
- Recognized the Facilities team, particularly Facilities Supervisor Mike Kasinger, for emergency roof repair work at City Hall following recent storms.
- Provided an update on the rock fall incident at the Wicks Water Treatment Plant. Initial mitigation was completed using protective barriers, and Phase Two was underway to improve protection. A geotechnical consultant was assisting with risk assessment. The long-term solution identified was construction of a new water treatment plant in a new location.
- The Wastewater Master Plan update was in progress and staff were working to schedule future work sessions similar to those held for the Water Master Plan.
- Requested Council confirmation of availability for a potential special meeting or work session on Tuesday, May 26.
- The Westside Interceptor Project was underway, a pre-construction meeting for the First

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 4

Street Streetscaping Project was scheduled for early February, and the Federal Street Plaza project was expected to go out to bid in February.

- Senator Drahan would be visiting later in the week to meet with staff and attend the Community Outreach Team.
- The QLife Board met, the Regional Broadband Action Team resumed meeting, and QLife awaited final NTIA approval of the State of Oregon BEAD proposal, which included QLife's funding request.
- A meeting occurred with the new Klickitat County Administrator regarding the Airport Joint Operating Agreement and progress would move forward.
- An update was provided on recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
 - Communication efforts, including videos in the What's Happening at City Hall series featuring Chief Worthy and Detective Castro, and updates to website resources and FAQs.
 - Met with Janet Hamada from Next Door to discuss services and potential proposals to address impacts to children and families related to immigration enforcement.
 - The internal Latino Affinity Group continued to meet, formalize structure, and explore staff training and recommendations.

CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Richardson reported;

- Chaired an Urban Renewal Board meeting and noted between approximately \$4.5 and \$6 million available over the next several years to support Downtown investment. Encouraged interested property owners and businesses to contact Economic Development Officer Jacob Anderson regarding potential incentives and project ideas.
- Urban Renewal Agency was seeking additional project ideas, program adjustments, and opportunities for small improvements as part of broader discussion of future investments.
- Attended a Traffic Safety Commission meeting.
- Attended a public meeting regarding the Portland Harbor cleanup. Noted the City had contacted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting ongoing communication and suggested additional coordination with the nonprofit organization Neighbors for Clean Air, which hosted the meeting. Encouraged continued engagement with decision makers due to the scale of proposed sediment removal and potential transport routes through The Dalles.
- Shared information about a candidate forum for Democratic primary candidates for House District 52 at 1:00 p.m. at the Senior Center.
- Thanked Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) for opening the emergency cold weather shelter, noting approximately 28 to 30 individuals had been served.

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 5

Councilor Randall reported;

- Participated in briefings with the Mayor and the City Attorney.
- Attended a Budget Subcommittee meeting for Household Hazardous Waste.

Councilor Wring reported;

- Attended the Urban Renewal Board meeting and encouraged business owners and the public to share ideas and input regarding potential projects and use of available Urban Renewal funds.
- Attended a meeting at City Hall regarding houselessness with the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, Chief Worthy, and Captain Carrico.
- Attended the Portland Harbor Superfund update meeting

Councilor McGlothlin reported;

- Attended a Regional Airport Commission meeting.
- Attended a meeting regarding potential soil transfer related to the Portland Harbor cleanup and expressed concern about the scale of proposed sediment movement.
- Participated in a KODL Coffee Break with the Mayor.
- Attended a small community discussion focused on future economic growth and vision for the community.
- Participated in a briefing with the Mayor and Councilor Wring.

Councilor Runyon reported;

- Attended a hazardous materials meeting with representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and environmental organizations regarding potential sediment transport from the Portland Harbor cleanup. Follow-up communication occurred with The Dalles Disposal regarding existing truck traffic and potential impacts. Additional research continued on alternative disposal locations.
- Participated in a QLife meeting regarding internet capability in rural Wasco County and the City, noting continued progress and community updates through local media outlets.

Mayor Mays reported;

- He would hold his report items for the next meeting

CONSENT AGENDA

It was moved by Randall and seconded by Wring to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion carried 5 to 0, Randall, Wring, Richardson, McGlothlin voting in favor; none opposed; none absent.

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 6

Items approved on the consent agenda were:

- A) Approval of the January 12, 2026 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
- B) Resolution No 26-007 Concurring with the Mayor's Appointments to the Traffic Safety Commission and Beautification and Tree Committee
- C) Resolution No. 26-003 A Resolution for a Class Exemption from Competitive Bidding for Certain Elevator Modernization and Major Repair Public Improvement Contracts Under ORS 279C.335
- D) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Public Improvement Agreement with TK Elevator Corporation for Elevator Modernization Upgrades at City Hall
- E) Resolution No. 26-004 Accepting and Authorizing the City Manager to Execute OEM Grant Agreement and to Conditionally Proceed with Sourcewell Generator Equipment Purchase
- F) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Professional Services Agreement with KPFF Consulting Engineers for Design Construction Observation / Contract Administration Support for the First Street Streetscape Project

CONTRACT REVIEW BOARD ACTIONS

Resolution No. 26-005 Amending the City of The Dalles Local Contract Review Board Rules (Effective January 26, 2026)

City Attorney Jonathan Kara reviewed the staff report.

In response to questions from Council, City Attorney Kara clarified the following:

- Contracts over \$100,000 would continue to require City Council oversight and approval, consistent with current practice.
- Contracts \$25,000 and above would still require a good faith effort to obtain competition and maintain written records of quotes or negotiations.
- The distinction between contracts under \$250,000 and over \$250,000 related only to whether Competitive Sealed Bids or Requests for Proposals (RFPs) were required.
- The proposed changes did not reduce transparency to City Council or the public and were intended to improve efficiency, clarity, and standardization of rules.
- Administrative spending authority remained unchanged, and contracts over \$100,000 would continue to appear on the Consent Agenda for Council review.
- Changes affected only the method used to select contractors, not the amount of money spent, scope of work, or contract terms.

Mayor Mays invited public comment on the item.

Tim Fain, a resident and business owner in Dufur, spoke regarding concerns about proposed

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 7

changes to the City's contracting rules and how they related to a recent resolution naming nonprofit partners. He stated he had compared the 2023 contracting rules with the proposed changes and believed the revisions shifted from objective competition toward what he described as a trust and confidence standard for personal services. He questioned the increase of the direct appointment limit to \$250,000 and whether this could allow contracts of that size to be awarded without a formal competitive process if an ongoing relationship existed. He referenced a recent resolution that named specific nonprofit organizations and questioned whether naming those partners could qualify them for future contracts under the proposed rules without additional competition. He asked whether the proposed standards ensured the City would still obtain best market value and whether transparency for the public would be maintained. He added, while he was not making a direct accusation, the timing of the resolution naming specific nonprofit partners and the proposed changes to contracting rules created what he described as concerning optics from an outside perspective. He questioned how decisions were made regarding trust versus measurable criteria in selecting partners and asked who determined those standards. He also noted awareness of a Council member serving on the board of one of the named organizations and said this contributed to his perception of how the situation might appear to the public. He suggested future resolutions focus on identifying service needs rather than naming specific partners and stated the combination of named organizations and changes to personal services contracting processes appeared unclear and raised questions for observers.

Mayor Mays asked the City Attorney to respond.

In response to questions, City Attorney Kara clarified the following:

- Current 2023 Local Contract Review Board (LCRB) rules already allow direct negotiation of personal services when the work requires an ongoing, long-term relationship of knowledge and trust, with a current limit of \$200,000.
 - The proposed update did not change this standard and only increased the threshold to \$250,000 to align with other procurement limits and State law.
- Personal services contracts of this type still required budgetary authorization and City Council approval; administrative authority to independently award such contracts did not change.
- The language allowing trust-based selection of personal services had existed in prior rules dating back to at least 2011.
- Resolution 26-002 did not create a partnership with any organization. It directed the City Manager to explore and pursue what a potential partnership might look like and return to Council at a future public meeting.
- Any future contract for services would still be required to follow LCRB rules, including competition where required by value or type of service.

- Disclosure had been made regarding service on the board of One Community Health, and Oregon Government Ethics law provides an exception for serving on the board of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- The City regularly enters into agreements with multiple nonprofits through the annual nonprofit grant program, which follows an established evaluation process through the Budget Committee and City Council, independent of the referenced resolution.

When asked by Council for an example to justify the proposed rule changes, City Attorney Kara explained:

- The proposed 2026 rules would provide procurement authority not clearly available under the 2023 rules, allowing the City to work more efficiently with contractors already deeply familiar with specific projects.
- Using the First Street project as an example, a subconsultant with approximately 17 years of involvement in the project had detailed knowledge of permit compliance and monitoring requirements.
- Under current rules, the City could not easily contract directly with this subconsultant without triggering delays, additional cost, and potential impacts to the project schedule.
- The proposed rules would allow continued work with highly familiar contractors in a way that reduced liability, supported permit compliance, and avoided unnecessary duplication of effort.

It was moved by Randall and seconded by Richardson to adopt Resolution No. 26-005 as presented.

The motion carried 5 to 0, Randall, Richardson, Runyon, McGlothlin, Wring voting in favor; none opposed; none absent.

Adopting Findings and Authorizing the City Manager to Execute a Professional Services Agreement with Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc. to Provide Archaeological Compliance and Monitoring Services for the First Street Streetscape Project

City Attorney Jonathan Kara reviewed the staff report.

Community Development Director Joshua Chandler responded to a Council question regarding the cost of archeological services for the First Street project, the following clarification was provided:

- The contract amount was a not-to-exceed figure intended to account for the possibility of an inadvertent discovery, such as culturally significant materials, which would require immediate and intensive archeological monitoring.

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 9

- Monitoring was already planned as part of the project, with up to 50 days of archeological oversight during excavation in sensitive areas.
- Unique conditions of the project limited the ability to conduct full testing in advance because excavation would occur beneath existing historic walls that must first be removed. What exists beneath those walls was unknown.
- First Street contains four identified archeological sites, including a significant site associated with the historic Chinatown area located near the existing walls.
- If a discovery occurred, construction would pause and costs would increase as required for compliance with permit and cultural resource protections.

In response to a Council question about why an RFP was not issued for archeological services, City Attorney Kara explained:

- Archeological services were considered professional services where qualifications, not lowest cost, were the primary selection criteria under Oregon procurement standards.
- It was unlikely another firm would be more qualified to manage compliance for a project they had helped design and monitor for approximately 17 years.
- The firm had been instrumental in navigating State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requirements and developing the permit compliance and monitoring plans for the project.
- Issuing an RFP would create significant delays due to required advertising periods, proposal review, and Council award processes, with no expectation of meaningful competition for this specific project.
- Staff identified an opportunity to contract directly with the firm, which was expected to reduce costs by approximately \$20,000 while keeping the project on schedule.

It was moved by Wring and seconded by McGlothlin to adopt findings and authorize the City Manager to execute a Professional Services Agreement with Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc. for the First Street Streetscape Project in an amount not to exceed \$399,082.70, as presented.

The motion carried 4 to 0, Wring, McGlothlin, Randall, Richardson voting in favor; none opposed; Runyon absent.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution No. 26-006 Amending the City Fee Schedule (effective January 27, 2026)

City Attorney Jonathan Kara reviewed the staff report.

In response questions regarding dog license fees, Klebes clarified the following:

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 10

- The majority of revenue generated from dog licenses would support the Columbia Gorge Humane Society.
- A portion of the fees may be used to cover software and data management needs required to administer the licensing program.
- One intent of the licensing program was to provide more consistent financial support to the local animal shelter.
- The delayed implementation date for licensing requirements was intended to allow time for program development, public education, and community compliance.
- Total revenue would depend on the number of residents who obtained licenses, which would also help provide a clearer understanding of the number of dogs in the community.

He also expressed concern about the proposed increase to street closure permit fees, noting the cost would rise from approximately \$85 to about \$280. He stated this increase was significant and cautioned against discouraging community activities that often rely on street closures, while acknowledging the need to recover public costs.

In response to questions about the increase in banner fees, Deputy Public Works Director David Mills explained:

- The fee reflected the amount of staff time required to install and remove a banner.
- Installation and removal required two staff members for approximately one hour each time, totaling about four hours of staff time per banner.
- Use of the bucket truck, insurance requirements, and safety guidelines for banners spanning Second Street contributed to the cost.
- The fee considered comparisons with other cities and could have been set higher based on actual labor and equipment costs.
- The fee applied only to the large banner installed across Second Street by City staff, not smaller banners on decorative lighting.
- Approximately 12 to 15 banners were installed annually, with most occurring between Cherry Festival and November.

Councilor Richardson expressed concern about the proposed increase to street closure permit fees, noting the cost would rise from approximately \$85 to about \$280. Following Richardson's comments regarding street closure permit fees, discussion clarified:

- Fees were waived for community and nonprofit events, including events such as Cherry Festival. The proposed increase would apply only to non-community events.
- Staff time required to deploy and remove barricades, signage, and traffic control measures typically involved at least two staff members for a minimum of two hours.
- Council discussed balancing cost recovery with encouraging Downtown activity and small business events.

MINUTES

City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

Page 11

- Some Council members expressed interest in lowering the proposed increase as a compromise, while others noted the fee reflected actual labor and equipment costs.
- General discussion reflected a desire to both recoup City costs and avoid discouraging community activity.

It was moved by Richardson and seconded by McGlothlin to adopt Resolution No. 26-006 with an amendment to change the sidewalk street closure fee to \$100.

Mayor Mays asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to speak on the item.

Rodger Nichols, a resident of The Dalles, commented on the proposed fee increases, noting the variation in how different fees were adjusted. He observed some fees increased significantly while others changed only slightly or new fees were added. He stated the adjustments did not appear consistent and questioned the rationale behind varying increases rather than applying a uniform percentage change.

Kara clarified that fees were not intended to generate revenue for the City but to recoup actual administrative costs. He explained that variations in fee adjustments reflected differences in services provided by various departments and the staff time required to administer them. Some fees required only minor adjustments, while others had not been updated for many years and required larger increases to align with current costs. He noted that incremental adjustments over time would likely have reduced the need for larger increases now and stated the overall goal was to ensure fees more accurately reflected the cost of providing services rather than serving as a funding source for general operations.

Kara reminded Council that a motion and second were on the floor and asked the Clerk to restate the motion.

City Clerk Amie Ell repeated the motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-006 amending the city fee schedule with an amendment to adjust the sidewalk and street closure fee to \$100.

Kara explained that discussion and deliberation could continue on the motion currently on the floor. He advised that if Council wished to discuss other fees or topics outside the scope of the motion, it would be appropriate for the maker and seconder to withdraw the motion, or for Council to vote on it before moving to other matters.

Richardson withdrew his motion. McGlothlin withdrew his second.

Public Works Director Dale McCabe responded to questions about changes to water meter and sewer service installation charges. He said the City previously used a time-and-materials model before moving to a flat fee based on an average estimate. He stated the flat fee no longer

reflected actual costs, especially when conditions such as rock increased labor and equipment needs. Review of the Municipal Code showed the City should have continued using a time-and-materials approach. He added this method was more equitable because some properties had been paying more than actual costs while others had been paying less.

Kara stated the Municipal Code required water and sewer service installation costs be recovered on a time-and-materials basis. He explained the proposal aligned current practice with existing ordinance and noted any change would require a future ordinance amendment.

It was moved by Richardson and seconded by McGlothlin to adopt Resolution No. 26-006 with an amendment to change the sidewalk street closure fee to \$100

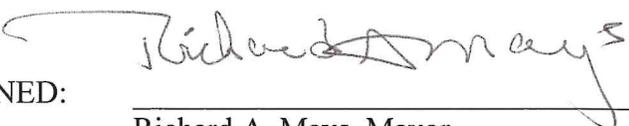
McGlothlin stated concern about accusations on social media suggesting government actions were intended to enrich personal interests. He affirmed a fiduciary commitment to act in the best interest of the City, avoid conflicts of interest, and manage public funds carefully. He said Council and staff worked with honesty and transparency.

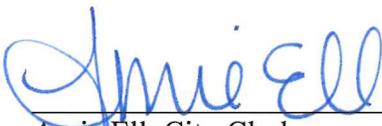
The motion carried 5 to 0, Richardson, McGlothlin, Randall, Runyon, Wring voting in favor; none opposed; none absent.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Submitted by/
Amie Ell, City Clerk

SIGNED: 
Richard A. Mays, Mayor

ATTEST: 
Amie Ell, City Clerk

Rachel Smolkin, CEO
OPB

January 17, 2026

Dear Ms. Smolkin:

I was deeply disappointed after reading the OPB “news” article by April Ehrlich published on January 15, 2026 titled *As Google’s water demands grow, The Dalles aims to pull more from Mount Hood forest*. From my reading of the article, I believe that it would have been more appropriately presented as an opinion piece rather than a news article. Over the years I have believed that OPB seeks to provide balanced and objective reporting that is often lacking in many media sources; perhaps I have been in error since I often lacked the detailed knowledge on prior subjects to know any better. On this topic I do have knowledge and can readily see that objectivity was compromised in this article which contained incorrect information, lacked relevant context and presented false innuendo. The biases presented in the article are disturbing to me and I believe do a disservice to OPB readers.

The article presents a premise that water use by Google is the driving motivation for the City’s plans to eventually increase the capacity of its Crow Creek Reservoir. While Google is currently the City’s largest water customer, it is incorrect to imply that their water demands are the driving force for the City’s plans to increase its watershed reservoir storage capacity.

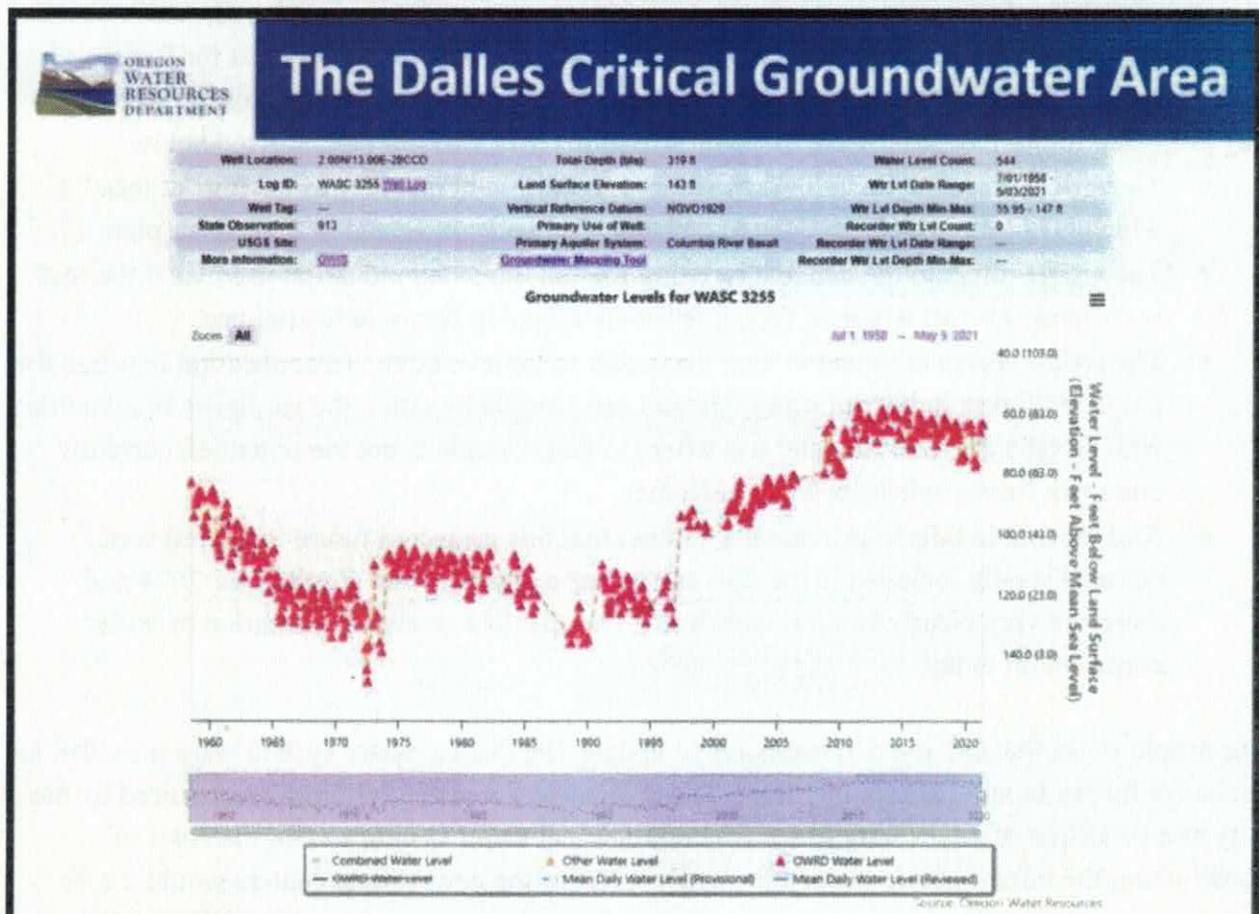
The article references the City’s 2024 Water System Master Plan and its forecast for future industrial water demands. In one paragraph, the article misrepresents the one million gallon per day projected future industrial water demand in a number of ways as summarized below.

- The article presents the volume of water as a minimum quantity by saying “at least” which is not the way the predicted demand volume is presented in the master plan.
- The article refers to the demand as being for “an unnamed industrial user” as if the user is currently known when, in fact, it is for an unknown future industrial user.
- The article seems to intend to lead the reader to believe there is a connection between the projected future industrial water demand and Google by citing the similarity in quantities with Google’s historical water use when, in fact, Google is not the potential, currently unknown future industrial water customer.
- And the article fails to provide the context that this projected future industrial water demand is only included in the **50-year water use projection** for the year 2074 and therefore very clearly is not related to the Google data centers in operation or under construction today.

The article states that Google’s investments to update The Dalles’ water system were provided in exchange for tax breaks. This is incorrect. The updates to the water system were required by the City as a condition of connecting to the City’s municipal water system so that the costs of constructing the infrastructure needed to supply water to the newest data centers would not be

borne by the City's existing water customers. The tax breaks were provided separately and independently through state-approved industrial development incentive programs.

The article states that the earlier aluminum smelter's operation in The Dalles strained groundwater resources, which helped put The Dalles on state regulators map of critical groundwater areas; internet AI sources also make this claim. The claim, however, is incorrect. The critical groundwater area was established in 1959 after about two decades of aquifer level declines due to overuse. The aluminum smelter wasn't built until 1958, and its water use did not contribute to the analysis that led to the designation. The primary cause of the groundwater overuse at the time was agricultural irrigation which was mitigated when the The Dalles Irrigation District water system became operational in 1966 and provided irrigation water from the Columbia River rather than the aquifer. A screenshot from the slide presentation from the March 5, 2025 Wasco County Board of County Commissioners meeting, for which a link was provided in the article, shows that water levels in The Dalles Pool aquifer originally stabilized (quit declining) in the late 1960s and 1970s when most irrigation use ended. Water levels then increased in the 1990s with closure of the aluminum smelter and re-stabilized at a higher level in the early 2000s.



The article states that the City has the right to pump the same amount of water as the prior aluminum smelter, potentially straining groundwater resources again. The assertion is incorrect. First, only a portion of the smelter's prior groundwater rights were transferred to the City, not all of them. Second, the hydrograph above shows that aquifer water levels remained fairly stable when the smelter was operating from 1966 when irrigation use was reduced through the late 1990s when the smelter ceased operations. Lastly, the capacity of the aquifer was studied as part of the water supply planning process during the City's consideration of the newest data centers and the predicted future use of groundwater will be within the aquifer's sustainable capacities.

The article claims that if federal land around the reservoir is transferred to the City, The Dalles won't need to undergo a federal environmental assessment. This statement fails to mention that any future project to expand the reservoir would still need federal permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers which consults with US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service and affected Tribes on projects, and permits or approvals from state agencies including Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oregon Division of State Lands. Environmental assessments and approvals for the project will be required regardless of ownership.

In my opinion, the most egregiously misleading part of the article is where it claims "Suddenly, The Dalles needed more water," a comment that seems to me is intended to create a cause-and-effect relationship between Google's data centers and the City's plan to expand its Crow Creek Reservoir. Prior to the article's publication, the City provided detailed information to the author (in a January 7 email from Dale McCabe) confirming that an expansion of the reservoir and acquisition of the adjacent properties were identified in the City's long-term water supply plans well before the consideration for any data centers. That history is summarized again as follows.

- The City formally approached the US Forest Service in 1995 (30 years ago) requesting acquisition of land adjacent to Crow Creek Dam and Reservoir, and contiguous to existing City-owned land, to facilitate the efficient operation and long-term management of City-owned water supply infrastructure. The City already owned nearly all of the property on which the dam is located and most of the reservoir property. Consolidation of the property ownership would reduce the administrative burdens for both agencies. The City and Forest Service were unable to complete the land acquisition through the available administrative processes, so a legislative solution was eventually sought through discussions with Representative Bentz.
- The City applied for and received water rights to expand the reservoir in 1999, again well before the development of any data centers.
- The City's 2006 Water Master Plan showed the need to eventually expand the reservoir.
- The City's updated 2024 Water System Master Plan thoroughly analyzed future water demands projected for the City, including the demands projected from the data centers. This plan identifies a project to expand the capacity in about 2040, 15 years from now.

The record clearly shows that a reservoir expansion has been planned for decades and is in no way "sudden." It is also clear that the expanded reservoir capacity is not needed to meet the anticipated water demands of Google's data centers since it won't be constructed until 15 years after the data centers are fully operational.

The issues of water and energy demands by data centers warrant public awareness and are worthy of discussion to best balance use of resources with modern services and the benefits they provide. The debate should not be influenced by assertions that are not accurate. The discussion and resulting decision-making are best supported by the correct objective reporting of facts. Unfortunately, this recent OPB article falls far short of meeting the needed standard of objectivity to positively support those processes.

One final note - according to Mayor Rich Mays, he and the City's Public Works Director Dale McCabe met with the author of this article on December 22, 2025 at The Dalles city hall. During that meeting, Mayor Mays encouraged the author to reach out to me to get further information relevant to this subject matter due to my decades-long experience and expertise with The Dalles water system. I wonder how many of the above-described inaccuracies could have been avoided had Ms. Ehrlich reached out to meet with me.

Respectfully,



Dave Anderson, retired
Former Public Works Director, City of The Dalles