

**CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL**

City Clerk Burkhart called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilmembers David M. Viafore, Shannon Reynolds, Brett L. Wittner, Karen Mauer-Smith, Hunter T. George, Nikki Bufford, and Joe Barrentine were present.

Councilmember Shannon Reynolds attended the meeting virtually.

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S REPORT****A. City Clerk: Suspension of Rules**

City Clerk Burkhart reviewed the process for the selection of Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore based on the information that the Council received on Council's Rules of Procedures on Election of Officers and Robert's Rules of Order relating to Nominations, Elections, and Voting. City Clerk Burkhart stated that if the Council concurred, two motions would be required: the first motion to suspend Council's Rules and Procedures for this item of business, and the second motion to adopt the procedure option for selecting a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore.

**Councilmember Viafore MOVED that Council suspend the Fircrest City Council Rules and Procedures for the Selection of Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore and adopt Robert's Rules of Order relating to Nominations, and Elections; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.** City Clerk Burkhart invited Councilmember comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**Councilmember Viafore MOVED that the Council adopt the Majority procedure option for electing a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore as listed in the information provided by the City Clerk; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.** City Clerk Burkhart invited Councilmember comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**B. City Clerk: Selection of Mayor**

City Clerk Burkhart opened the floor for nominations for the position of Mayor for a two-year term:

- Councilmember Viafore passed.
- Councilmember Reynolds passed.
- Councilmember Wittner passed.
- Councilmember Mauer-Smith nominated Councilmember Bufford.
- Councilmember George nominated Councilmember Bufford.
- Councilmember Bufford passed.
- Councilmember Barrentine nominated Councilmember Bufford.

City Clerk Burkhart closed the nominations. **Councilmember George MOVED to appoint Councilmember Nikki Bufford to the position of Mayor of the City of Fircrest City Council for a two-year term effective immediately; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.** City Clerk Burkhart invited Councilmember comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**C. Selection of Mayor Pro-Tempore**

Mayor Bufford stated that the selection of Mayor Pro Tempore for the two-year term would follow the same procedure as the selection of the Mayor and opened the floor for nominations.

- Councilmember Viafore nominated Councilmember Wittner.
- Councilmember Reynolds nominated Councilmember Wittner.
- Councilmember Wittner passed.
- Councilmember Mauer-Smith nominated Councilmember Wittner.
- Councilmember George nominated Councilmember Wittner.
- Councilmember Barrentine nominated Councilmember Wittner.

**Councilmember Viafore MOVED to appoint Councilmember Brett L. Wittner to the position of Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Fircrest City Council for a two-year term effective immediately; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).****D. Proclamation: Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

Mayor Bufford read the proclamation titled Martin Luther King Jr. Day into the record. **Councilmember Viafore MOVED to authorize the Mayor's signature on the proclamation proclaiming Monday, January 20, 2026, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the City of Fircrest; seconded by Councilmember Wittner.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments; none were provided. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none were provided. Mayor Bufford encouraged community participation in the upcoming Day of Service.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).****CITY MANAGER COMMENTS**

- Acting City Manager Grover congratulated the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore and welcomed Councilmember Barrentine back to Council. He provided a brief report on several items, including youth basketball programming and the upcoming Daddy-Daughter dance. Acting City Manager Grover requested Council's consideration to add an item to the agenda to authorize Mahoney Planning to initiate the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment related to housing adequacy and land capacity. There were no objections from Council.

Mayor Bufford invoked Rule 20. Order of Business from the Fircrest City Council Rules and requested to modify the Council agenda to add 5A. Motion: 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment under City Manager Comments.

**Councilmember Wittner MOVED to authorize Mahoney Planning to initiate the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment related to housing adequacy and land capacity analyses; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.**

Kim Gunderson, Mahoney Planning, provided an overview of the proposed 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment and highlighted that the Fircrest Municipal Code requires comprehensive plan amendments to be authorized by Council or the Planning Commission by motion and vote. Mrs.

Gunderson reported that the Comprehensive Plan may be amended annually through an open docket process. The amendment is needed to correct and complete the housing adequacy analysis adopted as part of the 2024 periodic update and to adopt implementing development regulations as required by the Growth Management Act. Mrs. Gunderson recommended completing a supplemental land capacity analysis, which would be completed by November 2026. Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments. Councilmember Viafore requested the status of the Cottages at Fircrest development. Mrs. Gunderson stated that it is no longer an active project. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

Councilmember Viafore requested an estimated cost from Mahoney Planning to initiate the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Mrs. Gunderson stated that the project is not expected to exceed \$10,000.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS**

- Police Chief Celis congratulated the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore and welcomed Councilmember Barrentine back to Council. Chief Celis provided a department update to include calls for service, personnel updates, equipment updates, and upcoming officer training. There was a brief discussion on the price set for the surplus 2016 patrol vehicles and the traffic conditions at the recently modified stoplight at Regents Boulevard.
- Public Works Director Bemis congratulated the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore and welcomed Councilmember Barrentine back to Council. He reported that the Regents Boulevard intersection is fully functioning and that a secondary improvement, the addition of a pedestrian push button between Alice Peers Park and the Fircrest Public Safety Building, is needed to meet ADA requirements. Director Bemis also reported that Pump No. 7 is being pulled for inspection due to an equipment failure. The pump is currently under warranty.

**COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

- Councilmember Viafore asked if there had been any recent discussions with the City of Tacoma or Pierce County regarding the prior sewer issues and whether the City is prepared for future development. Director Bemis reported that there has been no additional communication; however, there are ongoing efforts regarding inflow and infiltration (I&I) reduction efforts.
- Councilmember Reynolds; no comments.
- Councilmember Wittner congratulated Mayor Bufford and welcomed back Councilmember Barrentine.
- Councilmember Mauer-Smith wished everyone a Happy New Year.
- Councilmember George congratulated Mayor Bufford and Mayor Pro Tempore Wittner and welcomed back Councilmember Barrentine. He requested to add an item to the agenda under New Business: 13C. Pierce Transit Appointment. There were no objections from the Council.
- Councilmember Barrentine congratulated the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore and thanked staff for assistance during the transition back to Council. He highlighted Pierce County's annual Point-In-Time homeless count and encouraged community members to consider volunteering. He also reported on the upcoming Emergency Food Network Hunger Walk in May.

- Mayor Bufford welcomed Councilmember Barrentine back to the Council and thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve as the Mayor. She wished everyone a Happy New Year.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Mayor Bufford invited public comment. There were none.

**COMMITTEE, COMMISSION, AND LIAISON REPORTS**

Mayor Bufford stated that there were no current liaison assignments and no liaison reports for January. She invited Councilmembers to reach out to her directly if they are seeking a specific liaison assignment.

**A. Administration**

There was no report.

**B. Built Environment, Planning, and Building**

There was no report.

**C. Finance, Information Technology**

There was no report.

**D. Other Liaison Reports**

There was no report.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

Mayor Bufford requested that the City Clerk read the Consent Calendar:

- A. Approval of Check No. 223923 through 223955 in the amount of \$73,036.77
  - Approval of the Check No. 14563 through No. 14564 in the amount of \$9,145.03
  - Approval of the Check No. 14565 through No. 14572 in the amount of \$80,870.05
  - Approval of the payroll electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$169,359.52
  - Approval of the payroll electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$172,016.40
- B. Approval of the December 9, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes
  - Approval of the December 23, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes
- C. Setting a Joint Meeting of the City Council and the Planning Commission on February 3, 2026, at 6:00 pm at Fircrest City Hall.
- D. Setting a Public Hearing on January 27, 2026, at 7:15 pm or shortly thereafter to receive comments on a proposed Solid Waste rate adjustment.
- E. Registering no objections to the Los Tapatios Liquor License Renewal

**Councilmember Wittner MOVED to approve the Consent Calendar as read; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.**

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

There was no public hearing scheduled.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS****A. Resolution No. 2012: Alameda Construction Bid Award**

Public Works Director Bemis briefed the Council on the proposed resolution and highlighted that the project is funded through the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) to provide ADA sidewalk improvements on Alameda Avenue West between Cypress Point and Emerson Street. **Councilmember George MOVED to adopt Resolution No. 2012, authorizing the City Manager to execute a Public Works Contract with Flowline, LLP for the Alameda Avenue West Sidewalk Project; seconded by Councilmember Viafore.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments. Councilmember George expressed appreciation to staff for the sidewalk addition. Mayor Bufford commented on the aesthetics of a small retaining wall. Director Bemis stated that the wall would be minimal and would only be near the property on Emerson Street. There was a brief discussion on the project construction timeline and community outreach for the affected neighborhoods. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**B. Resolution No. 2013: Public Defender Services Contract**

City Manager Masko briefed the Council on the proposed resolution and highlighted that the City is legally required to provide public defender services for indigent defendants. The agreement would provide services for the Fircrest and Ruston Municipal Courts. **Councilmember George MOVED to adopt Resolution No. 2013, authorizing the City Manager to execute a Professional Services Agreement with Sound Defenders, PLLC for public defender services; seconded by Councilmember Wittner.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments. Councilmember George expressed appreciation to the City Manager for their efforts in preparing this contract. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none were provided.

**The Motion Carried (7-0).**

**C. Pierce Transit Appointment**

Councilmember George provided background on the City's representation on the Pierce Transit Board. He stated that there are anticipated increased demands and time commitments in the upcoming year. Councilmember George reported that the shared Pierce Transit seat represents Fircrest, University Place, and Gig Harbor and that the current three-year term expires in mid-2027. Councilmember George proposed rescinding the current appointment to create a vacancy, retaining Fircrest's seat, and seeking a Fircrest Councilmember with sufficient capacity to complete the remainder of the term. He expressed appreciation for the current appointee's service.

**Councilmember George MOVED to rescind the appointment of Shannon Reynolds to the Pierce Transit Board, effective immediately; seconded by Councilmember Barrentine.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments.

- Councilmember Viafore requested a legal opinion from the City Attorney. Councilmember Viafore raised concerns regarding the authority and process to remove a representative from the Pierce Transit Board appointment. Councilmember Viafore stated that the position is a shared seat and the item was walked on without written materials or public notice. He also questioned whether discussions occurred with the current appointee prior to proposing to remove them from the seat.
- Councilmember George stated that he consulted with Pierce Transit staff, who advised that the Council may rescind the appointment, since the position is filled by a Fircrest Councilmember.
- City Attorney Eide stated that she had not yet reviewed the matter and would not be able to offer a legal opinion at that time. She would need to review the City's appointment process and Pierce Transit's governance structure before providing guidance.
- Councilmember Viafore stated that the Council nominates a representative to the Pierce Transit Board and stated that the appointment and removal require action by the other participating cities.
- City Attorney Eide explained that the Fircrest City Council appoints their own representative and may rescind that appointment by majority vote, which would create a vacancy, then subject to review of the Pierce Transit appointment process.

**Councilmember Viafore MOVED to table the discussion; seconded by Councilmember Wittner.**

Councilmember Reynolds requested a roll call vote. Barrentine – Aye; George – Nay; Mauer-Smith – Aye; Reynolds – Aye; Viafore – Aye; Wittner – Aye; Bufford – Aye.

**The Motion Carried (6-1), with Councilmember George dissenting.**

#### **CALL FOR FINAL COMMENTS**

Councilmember Viafore thanked staff for their hard work and expressed concern regarding deficit spending in the operating budget. He stated that the Council should review service levels, costs, and long-term financial sustainability to make sure the City maintains a balanced budget moving forward.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 8:14 P.M., Mayor Bufford reported that the Council would take a six-minute recess and convene into Executive Session, not to exceed ten (10) minutes, to discuss potential litigation, pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(i). City Manager Masko and City Attorney Eide were invited to the executive session

At 8:29 P.M., Mayor Bufford reported that the Executive Session will be extended by an additional fifteen (15) minutes.

Councilmember Reynolds left the Council meeting at 8:45 P.M.

The Council reconvened at 8:46 P.M.

JANUARY 13, 2026

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**ADJOURNMENT**

**Councilmember Mauer-Smith MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 P.M., seconded by Councilmember George.**

The Motion Carried (6-0).



Nikki Bufford, Mayor



Arlette Burkhart, City Clerk