

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Nikki Bufford 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, and Joe Barrentine were present.

PRESIDING OFFICER’S REPORT

A. Proclamation: Black History Month

Mayor Bufford read the proclamation titled Black History Month into the record. **Councilmember George MOVED to authorize the Mayor’s signature on the proclamation proclaiming the month of February is Black History Month in the City of Fircrest; seconded by Councilmember Viafore.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments. Mayor Bufford provided resources for the upcoming month to celebrate Black History Month. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none was provided.

The Motion Carried (7-0).

B. University Place School District – Capital Projects Presentation

University Place School District Superintendent Jeff Chamberlain provided a presentation regarding current ballot measures related to capital projects and school district funding. He stated that the district has three propositions on the ballot: the Educational Programs and Operations Levy, the Capital Projects Levy, and the School Construction Bond. Superintendent Chamberlain highlighted the current condition of the school facilities, the proposed project timeline, and the estimated tax impacts. Discussions included the presentation’s purpose, budgetary needs for students with special needs, the McCleary decision, and voter approval thresholds for levies and bonds. The Council thanked Superintendent Chamberlain for the presentation.

C. 2026 Liaison Assignments

Mayor Bufford read the Council liaison assignment into the record.

- Administration – Councilmember Mauer-Smith
- Finance and Information Technology – Councilmember Barrentine
- Parks, Recreation, and Sustainability – Councilmember Viafore
- Built Environment, Planning and Building – Councilmember Wittner
- Police/Public Safety and Court – Councilmember George
- Public Works and Facilities – Councilmember Reynolds

D. Investment Committee Appointments

Mayor Bufford briefed the Council on the Investment Committee vacancy and requested Council consideration to reappoint Councilmember Viafore to the Investment Committee. **Councilmember Reynolds MOVED to confirm the Mayor’s appointment of Councilmember Viafore to the Fircrest Investment Committee; seconded by Councilmember Mauer-Smith.** Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comment; none were provided. Mayor Bufford invited public comment; none was provided.

The Motion Carried (7-0).

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

City Manager Masko provided updates on several items, including the City's Alameda Avenue Sidewalk and Bicycle Improvement Project submission for the 2026 State House Transportation Budget Request to Representative Leavitt's office, the Federal Community Project Funding request for the Alameda Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvement Project between Emerson Street and Rosewood Lane, and scheduling the annual Council group photo.

There was a brief discussion about whether the federal funding package would be a standalone bill or part of a broader legislative package.

DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

- Police Chief Celis provided a departmental update to include calls for service, response to recent incidents, current fleet status, community engagement, staffing updates, and upcoming required training. Councilmember Reynolds requested additional information on community-based activities in future reports.
- Finance Director Deskins provided a departmental update to include ongoing year-end tasks, preparation of the annual financial report for the State Auditor's Office, new staff workstations, and that the City's audit was nearing completion. Councilmember Viafore commented on the status of the 2026 budget book. Finance Director Deskins stated that it was nearing completion.
- Public Works Director Bemis provided project updates to include the Regents Boulevard crosswalk pedestrian pushbutton, the Alameda Avenue West sidewalk project construction update, and current wastewater treatment costs. There was a brief discussion regarding the condition and maintenance of the Emerson sidewalks, a request for Council review of the sidewalk maintenance requirements under the Fircrest Municipal Code, and clarification on the phasing, location, jurisdiction, and design of the Alameda Avenue sidewalk projects.
- Parks and Recreation Director Grover provided an update on the upcoming Daddy-Daughter Dance event and basketball season logistics, including coordination with the University Place School District for gym space.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

- Councilmember Barrentine; no comments.
- Councilmember Mauer-Smith commented on broader community concerns and emphasized the importance of thoughtful decision-making and protecting individual rights.
- Councilmember George commented on law enforcement training and community policing.
- Councilmember Wittner thanked Superintendent Chamberlain and meeting attendees for their participation.
- Councilmember Reynolds; no comments.
- Councilmember Viafore welcomed and acknowledged former Planning Commissioner Jim Ottness, former City Councilmember Jim Andrews, and former volunteer Fire Lieutenant Clark Monnett.
- Mayor Bufford acknowledged receiving community inquiries and encouraged residents to be mindful of one another and support their neighbors during challenging times.

PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Mayor Bufford invited public comment. The following individuals provided comments:

- Brian Rybolt, Fircrest resident, commented on public comment procedures related to campaign and ballot measure discussions.
- Ken Walls, Fircrest resident, expressed concerns about ongoing noise and fumes from a generator operating at a neighboring property and requested City assistance. Councilmember Viafore commented on the concerns raised by residents regarding the generator use and stated that the issue has been ongoing. He highlighted that the Fircrest Municipal Code requires water and sewer service but does not require electrical service. Councilmember Reynolds asked about coordination with other agencies regarding the concerns. City Manager Masko stated that staff continue to work with partner agencies and have offered resources, which have been declined.
- Clark Monnett, Fircrest resident, expressed concerns regarding the ongoing noise and potential safety issues associated with a generator operating at a neighboring property.
- Jim Andrews, Fircrest resident, expressed concerns regarding the ongoing noise, odors, and potential safety issues associated with a generator operating at a neighboring property.
- Vince Navarre, 1205 Del Monte, expressed appreciation for the community policing efforts and law enforcement participation in the community, including the new library book stand built by Fircrest Detective John Roberts.
- Juliet MacArthur, no address provided, commented on community resources available for concerns about individual well-being and safety.

COMMITTEE, COMMISSION, AND LIAISON REPORTS

A. Pierce County Regional Council

Councilmember Reynolds reported that she will serve as the Transportation Policy Board representative.

B. Other Liaison Reports

Councilmember George reported on monitoring relevant legislation, including a housing-related legislative update.

Councilmember Reynolds reported on the Zoo and Trek Authority Board and its consideration of a future ballot measure. She also reported on the Pierce Transit Board, noting that it is undergoing an audit.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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

- A. Approval of Check No. 223956 through 224012 in the amount of \$361,102.76
Approval of Check No. 224013 through 224072 in the amount of \$368,429.13
Approval of payroll electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$170,195.36
- B. Approval of the January 13, 2026, Regular Meeting minutes
Approval of the January 20, 2026, Study Session minutes

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

The Motion Carried (7-0).

PUBLIC HEARING

A. To receive comments on a proposed Solid Waste Rate Adjustment

At 8:06 P.M., Mayor Bufford opened the public hearing. City Manager briefed the Council on the proposed solid waste rate adjustment, stating that the public hearing was to receive comments on the proposed solid waste rate adjustment. Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments; none were provided.

Mayor Bufford invited public testimony; none was provided.

At 8:08 P.M., Mayor Bufford closed the public hearing.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Untabling Pierce Transit Appointment for Discussion and Possible Action

Mayor Bufford reintroduced the Pierce Transit Appointment item regarding the potential rescission of Councilmember Shannon Reynolds' appointment and requested a motion to untable. **Councilmember George MOVED to untable the Pierce Transit Appointment Discussion; seconded by Councilmember Barrentine.**

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

The Motion Carried (5-2), with Councilmembers Viafore and Wittner dissenting.

Mayor Bufford requested an update from the City Attorney regarding questions raised at the prior meeting related to the process and the potential use of a resolution should the Council proceed.

City Attorney Eide stated that her conclusions remained unchanged and that, if the Council rescinded the appointment, the action would be treated as a vacancy, triggering a new nomination and selection process. She stated that the adoption of a resolution is not legally required, but it may be used to document the Council's decision and supersede prior actions. City Attorney Eide clarified that the action under consideration is not a rescission of a prior motion but instead a decision regarding the removal of an individual from an appointed position.

Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comments.

- Councilmember Viafore expressed concerns regarding the process related to the Pierce Transit appointment, including the timing and availability of information provided to Councilmembers. He stated that he believed additional review was needed and requested that Council consider tabling the item to allow staff additional time to review procedural matters. Councilmember Viafore requested that his concerns be reflected in the record and stated his opinion that a rolling vote may have occurred.

- City Attorney Eide clarified that the draft resolution was prepared by her and the City Manager as an optional procedural tool for the Council's consideration and was not proposed by any Councilmember or intended to indicate endorsement of a particular action.

Mayor Bufford invited public comment.

- Jim Andrews, address not provided, expressed concern about the decision-making process regarding the Pierce Transit appointment.
- Jim Ottness, 973 Altadena Drive, expressed concern and requested clarification on the reasons for the proposed action.
- Brian Rybolt, Fircrest resident, expressed concern about the proposed action.
- Vince Navarre, address not provided, expressed support for the current appointee and concern for the proposed action.
- Lisa Raberger, Fircrest resident, requested clarification on the reasons for the proposed action.
- Juliet MacArthur, address not provided, expressed opposition to the proposed action and concern about the process.
- Mark Overfield, Fircrest resident, expressed disappointment with the handling of the matter.
- Frank and Denise Ladenburg, 1309 Palm Drive, expressed opposition to the proposed action, support for the current appointee, and whether concerns had been raised by other jurisdictions.

Mayor Bufford invited Councilmember comment.

- Councilmember Wittner expressed concern regarding the process, and he would not support the proposed action.
- Councilmember George commented on the Pierce Transit Appointment item and highlighted upcoming organizational and leadership challenges facing Pierce Transit. He stated that the position would require significant time and engagement. He acknowledged the current appointee's service and stated his support for making a change at this time.
- Councilmember Barrentine stated that he had been contacted by Pierce Transit Board members regarding concerns about the current appointee's service on the Board and that additional review of the matter may be needed.
- Councilmember Viafore stated that he had received limited information regarding concerns raised by a Pierce Transit Board member and expressed concern about the lack of a formal process or information shared with the Council.
- Councilmember Reynolds outlined her qualifications, experience, and attendance related to the position. She stated that she had not received prior notice or specific performance concerns, expressed concern about the process and lack of supporting information presented to the Council, and highlighted the importance of continuity and stability during upcoming organizational and financial challenges. She stated that she did not believe sufficient justification had been provided to support removal at this time.
- Councilmember George stated he had also heard from representatives from the transit sector, and reiterated his support for making a change to the Pierce Transit appointment.
- Councilmember Reynolds raised questions regarding communication with her and the process.

Councilmember Viafore MOVED to table the Pierce Transit Appointment discussion; seconded by Councilmember Reynolds.

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

The Motion Carried (4-3), with Councilmembers George, Mauer-Smith, and Barrentine dissenting.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Police 2025 Year-End Report

Police Chief Celis presented the Fircrest Police Department 2025 Annual Report and highlighted crime statistics and community engagement activities for 2025. Mayor Bufford requested that the crime statistics be posted on the Police Department's social media page. There was a brief discussion on the National Night Out callout for volunteers.

CALL FOR FINAL COMMENTS

Councilmember Wittner expressed support for the Seahawks Football Team.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Viafore MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 P.M., seconded by Councilmember Reynolds.

The Motion Carried (7-0).



Nikki Bufford, Mayor



Arlette Burkhart, City Clerk