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**Town of Garfield
TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
January 14, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.
405 W California St.**

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cody Lord **Council Members:** Jason Bankus, Andrea Mills, Roni Mundell, and Connie Schaut **Staff: Clerk/Treasurer:** DonNell Ellsworth **Public Works:** Monty Rojas, and Walt Fealy **Police Dept.:** Marshal Joe Handley **Guest:** Shon Clark, Josh Gamez, Neal Leon, Wayde Morris, Michael Slavish

REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

- **ANDREA MILLS – ABSENCES:** Andrea notified the council that she will be gone during the January 28, and March 25 town council meetings and asked for them to be excused.
- **COUNCIL SEAT #1 RESIGNATION:** Craig Mitzimberg sent in a resignation letter on January 13. Mayor Lord notified everyone that the town will post the open seat notice and then will **accept letters of intent** until the **close of business on January 29, 2026**. Interviewing potential candidates will be during the February 11 meeting.
- **MAYOR PRO TEMPORE:** Mayor Lord informed the town council that the position of Mayor Pro Tempore must be voted on every six months and recommended Andrea Mills for the position. Roni Mundell **MOVED** to approve Andrea Mills as the Mayor Pro Tempore. Connie Schaut **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**
- **CLERK TRAINING IN FEBRUARY:** Mayor Lord informed the Town Council that DonNell will be attending Springbrook training in Spokane on February 11–12 and will be unavailable to take minutes for the first February meeting. The town council was asked if they wanted to move the meeting or ask another clerk to take meetings. This discussion was tabled until the January 28 meeting.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

- **SHON CLARK, COMMUNITY OF GARFIELD ASSOCIATION:** Mayor Lord thanked Shon Clark and the volunteers of the Community of Garfield Association for hosting the December Christmas party. Shon thanked Mayor Lord for attending. Shon also announced that the Community of Garfield Association will be hosting the **May Day event** again this year. **The event will be a two-day**

event, beginning May 15 and ending at 2:00 p.m., on May 16. The planned activities include a street dance, beer garden, car show, and multiple vendors.

Shon requested the town's assistance and support with allowing the event to be held at the town park on Spokane Street and with barricading streets for the parade and related events and potentially helping with supplying the garbage totes.

- **JOSH GAMEZ BIT WARDEN:**

Mayor Lord introduced Josh Gamez, who addressed cybersecurity and password protection. Mr. Gamez stated he has approximately nine years of experience in IT security and outlined services including antivirus management, two-factor authentication, staff training, and on-site and off-site data backups. Mr. Gamez advised his rate is \$125 per hour and noted he currently provides IT security services for both a large company and a small town. In response to a question from Councilmember Mundell regarding availability compared to VC3, Mr. Gamez stated he could not speak to VC3's availability but indicated he is easily reachable and reasonably available. He also noted the Town of Garfield would be his first private contract.

Andrea Mills **MOVED** to approve hiring Josh Gamez for IT Security and Support at a rate of \$125 per hour. Roni Mundell **seconded the motion. Vote: Jason Bankus—yes; Connie Schaut—no.**

Mayor Lord closed the guest comments at 7:15 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Connie Schaut **MOVED** to approve the minutes for the **2026 Final Budget Public Hearing and Regular Council Meeting** on December 9, 2025. Andrea Mills **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

POLICE REPORT:

Marshal Handley was present at the meeting.

Marshal Handley reported that since Christmas, the town has received only two calls.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:

Monty Rojas and Walt Fealy were present at the meeting.

Monty informed the town council of his resignation, effective February 6. He expressed his gratitude to the council and thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve the town.

The town council members thanked Monty for his service and dedication.

WATER/SEWER

Monty reported that there are multiple issues with the pumps at the Garfield Wastewater Treatment Plant and with the pump for Well #4. These matters will be discussed later in the meeting.

Monty and Walt have been working on preparing the sludge for transport to Barr-Tech.

Roach was called in to jet a manhole at 3rd and Jefferson Street that had become full of tree roots. Roach will also be coming out to the plant to conduct additional jetting work.

Monty and Walt are continuing to work on completing the Lead Service Line Inventory. The goal is to submit it before the 60-day deadline.

PARK/GARBAGE/STREET

Monty and Walt will coordinate and begin cleaning the recycling building at the end of 5th Street when time is freed up in their schedule.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **EPA DEADLINE FOR LEAD PIPE INVENTORY:** Mayor Lord notified council members that the Lead Service Line Inventory, due October 16, 2024, remains unsubmitted to the Washington Department of Health and EPA, prompting a summons notice. The deadline to submit is March 1, 2026; failure to comply could result in fines up to \$72,000 daily. Mayor Lord confirmed the inventory is more than 50% complete and will be completed on time.
- **UPDATE ON STRUCTURE BUILT OVER THE ALLEY:** Mayor Lord updated the town council members that he and the building inspector, Jacob Billington will be meeting on Friday, January 16, 2026, with Larry and Pamela Triggs regarding their addition and setback violations. Mayor Lord feels this can be handled swiftly at the advice of the town attorney, Eric Hanson.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **OFFICER HANDLEY RESIGNATION AS TOWN MARSHAL 1/31/2026:** Mayor Lord updated the town council that Marshal Handley has handed in his resignation as the Garfield Town Marshal. Mayor Lord is currently working with our attorney on how to handle guns, records and other items. An estimate has been sent to the town by Eric Body Shop in Colfax, regarding patrol car damage. DonNell is currently waiting to hear back from AWC/RMSA on how they will be handling the claim. DonNell will also need to become the public records officer for both police and town records. The Town Marshal records will be in the mayor's locking filing cabinet.
- **WHITMAN COUNTY DRAFT POLICE CONTRACT TO RESUME POLICE SERVICES 2/1/2026:** The town council discussed what services that town will

receive if the town were to go forward with the contract. Mayor Lord stated that the town would get 10 hours weekly unless after hours calls came in then it will become 6.5 hours.

Connie Schaut **MOVED** to accept and approve the contract with Whitman County Sheriff's Department starting on **February 1, 2026, for the amount of \$27,009.00 for 2026, and \$27,549.00 for 2027.** Andrea Mills **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

- **CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER FOR GARFIELD:** Mayor Lord asked for the town council's input on the future of the Code Enforcement Officer role, noting that Joe Handley has expressed interest in taking on the position. DonNell is reaching out to AWC/RMSA for guidance on how this would impact the town's liability insurance and to determine the best path forward. The discussion was tabled until the January 28 meeting.
- **EMPIRE DISPOSAL CONTRACT:** Mayor Lord presented a **5-year profit and loss report** showing that the town's garbage service currently **averages a net profit of only \$5,000 per year.** The town has two major challenges that need to be discussed regarding garbage's future.

With Monty leaving, the town needs a new CDL driver. Walt is scheduled for his written test on January 16 and will begin Drive509 training as soon as a spot opens. The current garbage truck is in **poor condition and needs replacement.** A **new truck** is estimated to **cost approximately \$120,000.**

The town handles the billing and collects a **12% administrative fee** (roughly **\$21,000/year**). Empire Disposal handles all equipment, maintenance, and labor. Empire Disposal handles all operations and billing; the town would no longer collect revenue but would have zero costs or responsibilities. Mayor Lord recommended the town council consider the **12% administrative option**, as it would significantly increase annual revenue (from \$5,000 to \$21,000) while removing the burden of equipment and maintenance costs.

This discussion has been tabled until the town council has more time to review, giving Empire Disposal a chance to send over the contract.

- **SEWER PLANT & WATER PUMPS (KME):** Mayor Lord and Monty updated the town council that the town currently has aging pumps at both the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Well #4. There **are supposed to be six pumps** operating at the **Wastewater Treatment Plant** but there are **only three currently working** and they will need to start being replaced or rebuilt. The town has ordered one to get it on its way at the cost of approximately **\$8,500 plus approximately \$2,000 in labor to install.** The town has **\$10,000 currently in reserves** to pay for the pump at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The **pump for Well #4** is currently **offline** and will be **assessed on Thursday, January 15,** for a better idea of what is going on.

Roni Mundell **MOVED** that KME get three pump options and prices and the go forward on the pumps. Connie Schaut **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

- **WATER & SEWER OPERATOR CONTRACTS:** David Tysz has offered to be the Contracted Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator and the Contracted Water Distribution Manger for the town for \$800 per month. The town is currently paying \$1,100 for both David and Paul Sifford.

Andrea Mills **MOVED** to approve hiring David Tysz to be the Contracted Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator and the Contracted Water Distribution Manger for **\$800 per month.** Roni Mundell **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

DonNell will edit the contract and resolution to **reflect the additional water distribution responsibility and the increase in \$100 a month pay.** This will be presented to the council during the **January 28** meeting.

MAYOR CREDIT CARD AUTHORIZATION: Mayor Lord asked the town council to approve a credit card in the amount of \$4000. Roni Mundell **MOVED** to authorize Mayor Cody Lord to have a town credit card with a limit of **\$4,000 per month.** Andrea Mills **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

- **FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE:**

Andrea updated the town council and mayor that the Garfield Fire Department has won a new to them fire truck. Chief McCully will be driving to Tumwater and back with it. The fire department stated that they will gladly help with the grant writing process on getting a new fire station and they wanted the town council and mayor to know this.

FINANCIAL:

Approval of Checks

Connie Schaut **MOVED** to approve payment of the bills. Andrea Mills **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

Payroll:

Checks: 12/19/25 16987-16991 & EFPTS	Total = \$7,772.74
01/05/26 17002-17008 L&I, DRS, EFPTS, WA CARES, PFML, ESD, AWC, HRA-VEBA	Total = \$15,119.13

Claims:

Checks: 12/30/25 16992-17001	Total = \$24,440.60
12/31/25 17015-17038	Total = \$17,007.26
01/14/26 17029-17035	Total = \$70,689.22

Total Claims and Payroll = \$135,028.95

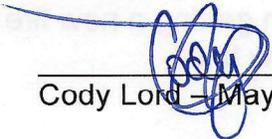
MAYORS' COMMENTS:

- **REVIEW EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK:** Mayor Lord will have DonNell send out the handbook for council to review and to make recommendations.
- **CREATE JOB DESCRIPTIONS:** Mayor Lord has written descriptions and will present at the next meeting.
- **EMPTY SPACES:** Mayor Lord is asking the town council to start thinking about what the town should do with our empty spaces. Such as the restaurant, the church, and the recycling building.
- **COUNCIL MEMBER POLICY:** Mayor Lord brought up that most of the towns surrounding Garfield have been putting these policies in place to help clarify different things and thinks that we should consider it. He will have DonNell send it out with the next agenda packet. Going forward the mayor and clerk will be sending out the advanced agenda packet out on the Wednesday before each council meeting. Roni stated that she thinks Andrea and Connie would be great resources on the job descriptions and on the handbook.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: RCW 42.30.110 (g) Review the performance of public employees: Mayor Lord called an executive session for the purpose of reviewing the performance of public employees and stated that the session will take **30 minutes** to begin at **8:10** and end at **8:40 p.m.**

ADJOURN:

Connie Schaut **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. Andrea Mills **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.** The council meeting was adjourned at 8:40 P.M.


Cody Lord – Mayor

ATTEST:


DonNell Ellsworth – Clerk/Treasurer