

Town of Garfield
TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
April 22, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.
Garfield Town Hall
405 W. California St., Garfield

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cody Lord

ROLL CALL: Council Members: Jason Bankus, Andrea Mills (virtually), Roni Mundell, Jody Opheim, Connie Schaut

Clerk-Treasurer: DonNell Ellsworth **Public Works:** Walt Fealy

Guest: Nathan Arganbright, Eugene Kobzar, Neal Leon, Greg Partch, and Michael Slavish

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

GREG PARTCH:

Greg Partch shared plans for seasonal window displays by local artist Sonja Hall. The initial designs will honor former Mayor Cheryl "Cher" Curtis and local Veterans.

A community tribute for former Mayor Curtis is scheduled for May 17 at the park.

Regarding the heavy-duty benches donated by Dan McDaniel, Mr. Partch proposed their use as memorials. He presented the town with a plaque honoring Cher Curtis to be installed on the bench located in front of the former restaurant.

On behalf of the Community of Garfield Association, Mr. Partch requested permission to host a July 4th fireworks display in the park, noting that a licensed pyrotechnician would be used and will provide insurance for the event.

Greg reviewed the town's history regarding the establishment of the garbage department and respectfully requested that the council consider a one-year moratorium on its dissolution. He further proposed that, should the town proceed with a contractor, the agreement should require that rates remain unchanged for at least two years.

Mayor Lord stated that if no one else wanted to speak about anything else he would close guest comments at 7:17 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Jody Opheim **MOVED** to approve the minutes for the Regular Town Council meeting on April 8, 2026. Roni Mundell **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:

Walt Fealy was present at the meeting.

WATER/SEWER:

Walt reported the repair of the leak at Main and 8th Street.

Matt and Walt are currently dewatering and cleaning the sewer plant. Additionally, Andy O'Neil discussed Department of Ecology technical support, which will assist staff in preparing for operator certification exams.

PARK/GARBAGE/STREET:

Matt and Walt are cleaning the recycling area. The Whitman County Landfill will swap the town's recycling bin once their truck is repaired. Following a cleanup of the caboose area, the town assisted the owner with hauling metal to recycling.

Mayor Lord requested that the town be able to purchase "No Dumping" signs. The town council members approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

GARBAGE DEPARTMENT CHANGES:

Mayor Lord opened the discussion by thanking Connie Schaut for her letter regarding the garbage department. Andrea Mills suggested that contractors would absorb most excise taxes and that a new truck purchase might not resolve long-term maintenance costs. Jason Bankus countered that losing the garbage department would eliminate one of the town's four main revenue streams, potentially causing financial hardship despite the department's current \$5k annual net. He noted that the town has averaged \$50k in garbage-related wages over the last five years and clarified that reserve funds were not specifically restricted to a new truck purchase.

Mayor Lord explained that dissolving the department would allow staff to focus more on Water and Sewer operations and park maintenance. Salaries would be offset by \$14k in Police Fund savings and the remaining street levy balance. He emphasized that the Department of Ecology (DOE) requires significant daily staff time at the wastewater plant, which is currently difficult to achieve on garbage days. Prioritizing these utilities is necessary to demonstrate the financial capacity for a new plant.

Jody Opheim raised concerns about the availability of spring and fall cleanups under either contractor and the impact of fuel surcharges. Nathan Arganbright added that WUTC-regulated contractor rates typically increase by 2–3% annually. While Jody suggested delaying the

transition until the start of the year to protect resident budgets. Mayor Lord concluded the session by asking the council if they were ready to vote on the garbage department changes.

Roni Mundell **MOVED** for the dissolution of the garbage department and for the town to sign a contract with a private contractor going forward. Jody Opheim **seconded the motion**, Andrea Mills **voted yes** to dissolve the garbage department, Connie Schaut and Jason Bankus **voted no** on dissolving the garbage department and contracting with a contractor.

EXCESS FEE FOR COMPOST & METAL RECYCLING: Mayor Lord asked the town council members if they would vote to approve a \$4.00 fee + 6% utility tax which equates to \$4.24, for all residential customers, this is to pay for the continuance of the metal recycling and composting waste cost.

Roni Mundell **MOVED** to approved for the town to charge \$4.24 with tax on all residential accounts to pay for the metal recycling and compost facility cost. Andrea Mills **seconded the motion**, Jody Opheim and Connie Schaut **voted yes** to bill all residential accounts \$4.24, and Jason Bankus **voted no** to charge all residential accounts \$4.24.

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER: Mayor Lord informed the town council member that Roni Mundell has volunteered to work as the town code enforcement officer for the next four months. This will allow her to touch base with the residents and get a true idea of the amount of time involved with the job. Jason Bankus also volunteered to help. Council was in support of these suggestions.

FINANCIAL AND PROCEDURAL POLICIES: Mayor Lord stated that all council members received a copy of the financial policies and asked if the council is ready to vote to approve.

Jason Bankus **MOVED** to approve and adopt the Financial and Procedural Policy as presented. Jody Opheim **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK: The town is currently waiting for feedback regarding the FMLA and PMFL portion before the handbook is complete.

NEW BUSINESS:

VOLUNTEER DAY AT TOWN PARK: Mayor Lord would like to arrange a park clean-up in May. The plan is to paint and stain the tables, paint the basketball post, and the restrooms. He asked the council members which day they would like to have the event. It was unanimously decided on May 8, at 10 a.m. This depends on the weather. Town hall will post flyers.

RESOLUTION 2026-08: STREET LEVY PRIMARY ELECTION COLLECTION FOR 2027: Mayor Lord presented Resolution 2026-08 approving that Street Levy in the Primary Election. This is the way the town pays for streetlights, and other street functions. Mayor Lord stated that he would like to run it in the primary election as a backup measure. Jody likes the idea of the backup, Connie stated she feels that the General Election is

adequate, Roni stated that the town send out some educational information and run it in the General Election, Andrea agreed with just running it in the General Election and Jason said to run it in the Primary and the General. The town will hold until the General Election.

AMENDMENT #4 DEADLINE EXTENSION FOR THE WWTP FACILITY PLAN:

Mayor Lord asked the town council to approve him signing the agreement with DOE regarding the extension request. Andrea Mills **MOVED** to approve the mayor to sign the agreement with DOE for Amendment #4. Roni Mundell **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.**

FINANCIAL:

Approval of Checks:

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

Payroll:

Checks: 17153-17156

Total = \$5,074.85

Claims:

Checks: EFT-DOR, 17157-17165

Total = \$61,832.44

Total Claims and Payroll = \$66,907.29

MAYORS' COMMENTS:

RECYCLING CENTER ROAD: Mayor Lord updated the council that Matt has went ahead and graded the towns portion of South 5th Street by the recycling center and Front Street.

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY, TOWN, AND JUB MEETING: Mayor Lord gave a quick recap of the meeting that the town had with DOE, and JUB this afternoon regarding the 10-year expired permit and that it will most likely be two years more before the town has one. The budget for new plants throughout the state is non-existent. The town officials will be attending the IACC conference in Wenatchee this fall.


SPRING SPRAYING: Mayor Lord updated the town council that Palouse Hills Lawn & Shrub has completed most of the spraying but still has some to do.

.09 GRANT THROUGH WHITMAN COUNTY: Mayor Lord is asking the town council members to come up with ideas on applying for a .09 grant through the Whitman County Commissioners for the 2027 granting cycle.

GMA -PUG PLAN: Mayor Lord informed everyone that the town is on schedule to complete the required portions.

ADJOURN:

Jason Bankus **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. Roni Mundell **seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.** The council meeting was adjourned at **8:36 P.M.**



Cody Lord - Mayor

ATTEST:



DonNell Ellsworth - Clerk-Treasurer