

**CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS
CITY COUNCIL**

Regular Meeting Minutes
606 Manitou Avenue
December 11, 2025

The City Council of Manitou Springs met in Regular Session on Tuesday, December 11, 2025, at 606 Manitou Avenue, in the City of Manitou Springs, County of El Paso, and State of Colorado.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT FOR ROLL CALL:

Mayor John Graham
Mayor Pro Tem Natalie Johnson
Councilor Judith Chandler
Councilor John Shada
Councilor Julie Wolfe
Councilor Nancy Fortuin
Councilor Michelle Whetherhult (Via Zoom)

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

C. ROLL CALL

All members of the City Council were present for the roll call.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilor Fortuin moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Wolfe. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

E. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Jenna Wells, Director of Visit Manitou Springs reported on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) updates at the Visitor Center, including a five-week training for multiple board members, inspections by two certified ADA Coordinators, and plans for improvements. She explained that the City ADA Coordinator had completed one of the inspections, noting that overall, the facility is currently accessible and that all issues are considered readily achievable fixes. Director Wells shared that one adjustment has already been made for a motion detecting light fixture in the bathroom.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Presentation of Warrants

Councilor Shada moved to approve the consent calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fortuin. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

G. HEARINGS

1. Second Reading and Public Hearing of Ordinance No. 2325, an Ordinance Adopting the Annual Budget and Appropriating Funds for Fiscal Year 2026 and Amending the Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2025

Finance Director Rebecca Davis reported that changes since first reading included, the creation of a Fund Balance Assigned for Fire Mitigation utilizing \$690,000, which previously was under Economic Development for The Manitou and Pikes Peak Cog Railway (COG) reimbursement of amusement or excise tax, as well as the addition of \$2,000 to the Planning Department to support Housing Advisory Board (HAB).

There was a brief discussion about the anticipated loss in revenue, during which Finance Director Davis confirmed the City expects approximately a \$655,000 reduction.

Councilor Shada emphasized the importance of funding wildfire mitigation given the community's high risk. He expressed appreciation that \$690,000 was set aside for this purpose, noting it represents solid progress toward the larger investment of \$1,000,000 that he had hoped for. He also confirmed that the unassigned fund balance for 2025 has dropped from the previously anticipated \$8,200,000 to \$4,300,000.

Mayor Graham opened the public hearing at 6:16 PM. Due to no public comment, Mayor Graham subsequently closed the public comment portion of the hearing.

Councilor Wolfe stated that she would prefer that the funds in the new Fire Mitigation Fund not be expended without Council approval, so the Council can ensure the money is used only for the most urgent and effective mitigation efforts. She noted the City's high wildfire risk, expressed concern about the lack of sufficient past investment in mitigation, and suggested that the City should ultimately aim to allocate up to \$1,000,000. She also expressed concern about low reserve levels and stated that allocating the funds to the COG instead would be detrimental to both the City and the COG given the potential impact of a major wildfire.

Councilor Chandler agreed that the Council's top priority should be public health and safety. She noted that the Council has a responsibility to review the use of COG-related funds each year as part of the broader budget process and highlighted the elevated geographic risk at the COG's location. She expressed support for beginning with the \$690,000 allocation.

Councilor Fortuin recommended that staff present a fire mitigation plan with a prioritized list of needs, including unfunded items, so the City can respond quickly if additional funding becomes available.

Councilor Shada reflected on prior years, noting stronger revenues and reserves allowed the City to fund the COG reimbursement while advancing projects. He supported not funding the COG reimbursement in 2026 due to wildfire risk, reduced reserves, and lower revenues.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson expressed agreement with reallocating the COG reimbursement. She emphasized the need for a multi-year plan for fire mitigation, acknowledged that additional funding will be needed, and stated that while she is concerned about reserve levels, she is comfortable moving forward with the budget with the expectation that reserves will be revisited in February.

Mayor Graham expressed support for reallocating the \$690,000 to fire mitigation, citing increasing insurance cancellations and rising rates as evidence of the community's wildfire risk. He stated that the City should not wait for outside solutions and suggested working on practical mitigation efforts, particularly in high-risk areas such as upper Ruxton Avenue, the COG and the Incline. He noted that while the funding will not solve the issue in one year, it represents meaningful progress toward protecting public safety, property, and the long-term viability of the community.

Councilor Whetherhult stated that she is in favor of using the funds for fire mitigation.

Councilor Wolfe noted that while the population of Manitou Springs is small, a great number of tourists visit the city year-round. She supported moving forward quickly with mitigation efforts, noted that outside contractors will be needed.

Councilor Chandler noted that the current red flag warning conditions demonstrate the ongoing and increasing wildfire risk, highlighting the need to take prevention seriously now to avoid future incidents.

Councilor Fortuin stated that wildfire risk and financial stability are her greatest concerns for the City and expressed support that the budget better reflects the priority of funding fire mitigation.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson moved to adopt Ordinance 2325, an Ordinance Adopting the Annual Budget and Appropriating Funds for Fiscal Year 2026 and Amending the Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilor Wolfe. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

H. BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Resolution No. 1825, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Adopting an Amended Employee Handbook

Human Resources Director Kelly Padilla presented the resolution, explaining two proposed changes, including a change to military leave due to updated laws and a change to no longer require drug screening for all accidents. She shared that the City Attorney advised drug screening only in cases of reasonable suspicion to avoid potential litigation that could come from screening all accidents

Councilor Chandler suggested that adding language to the resolution to better reflect and align with the acknowledgement language in the handbook.

Councilor Chandler moved to approve Resolution 1825, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Adopting an Amended Employee Handbook, as amended with the second sentence in Section 1 changed to state "The Human Resources Director is directed to provide a copy to all City employees and obtain confirmation from all City employees that they have received it, read it, understand it, and agree to it." The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Johnson. The motion carried (7-0).

2. Consideration of Resolution No. 1725, a Resolution Establishing a General Tax Levy for the purpose of Raising Revenue for the General Operating Fund, and the Voter Approved Mill Levies for Other Funds of the city of Manitou Springs

Finance Director Davis explained that each year the Council is required to approve the Mill Levy for the following tax year and that the proposed Mill Levy is 13 Mills, which should raise \$1,490,033 in property tax.

Mayor Graham moved to approve Resolution 1725, a Resolution Establishing a General Tax Levy for the purpose of Raising Revenue for the General Operating Fund, and the Voter Approved Mill Levies for Other Funds of the city of Manitou Springs. The motion was seconded by Councilor Chandler. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

3. Consideration of Resolution No. 1525, A Resolution Adopting an Updated Universal Fee Schedule

Finance Director Davis shared that the proposed changes to the universal fee schedule included the water, sewer, and storm drainage rates, as well as Memorial Hall rental rates. She clarified that Memorial Hall has a minimal rental time of two hours and is only available in evenings on weekdays, so that staff is not distracted during the workday.

There was a brief discussion about why the Memorial Hall rates were going up, during which Finance Director Davis explained that the increase was justified by improvements to heating, cooling, and insulation that make the space more valuable. She confirmed that there is a new stove in the kitchen as well.

Councilor Whetherhult inquired about an increase to permitted parking on Canon Avenue.

City Administrator Denise Howell clarified that the change to the rate for Canon Avenue was an error.

Councilor Shada moved to approve Resolution 1525, A Resolution Adopting an Updated Universal Fee Schedule, as amended to correct the rate for Canon Avenue to \$20. The motion was seconded by Councilor Whetherhult. The motion carried (7-0).

I. RECEIVE OR ACT ON COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

Councilor Fortuin shared that the holiday lights on the street light poles were out.

City Administrator Howell confirmed that the Chamber of Commerce oversees holiday lighting and that they would be notified of the outage.

Councilor Chandler thanked Councilors Fortuin and Whetherhult, and Mayor Graham for their service, noting that their last meeting will be on January 6, 2026.

Mayor Graham announced that the Manitou Springs Kiawanis Club will be hosting Breakfast with Santa on Saturday, December 13, 2025, from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM in Memorial Hall.

J. CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

City Administrator Howell expressed appreciation for staff support during holiday parade.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. An Executive Session to discuss a Personnel Matter regarding an employee, pursuant to 5.1(a) of the Manitou Springs Municipal Charter. This executive session concerns the annual performance review of the Finance Director.
2. An Executive Session to discuss a Personnel Matter regarding an employee, pursuant to 5.1(a) of the Manitou Springs Municipal Charter. This executive session concerns the annual performance review of the Chief of Police.
3. An Executive Session to discuss a Personnel Matter regarding an employee, pursuant to 5.1(a) of the Manitou Springs Municipal Charter. This executive session concerns the annual performance review of the City Clerk.

Mayor Graham read the purpose of the Executive Session into the record at 6:57 PM.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson moved to enter the Executive Session for the stated purpose. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fortuin. The motion was carried (7-0).

Note for the Record – Councilor Whetherhult left the meeting at 6:58 PM.

The City Council moved back to Regular Session at 7:59 PM. Mayor Graham confirmed the Executive Session was held solely for the stated purpose and that no formal decision was made.

ADJOURN

Councilor Wolfe moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fortuin. The motion carried (6-0).

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Attest:


Elena Krebs, City Clerk


John Graham, Mayor

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