

CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS
CITY COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes
606 Manitou Avenue
April 21, 2026

The City Council of Manitou Springs met in Regular Session on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, 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 Natalie Johnson
Mayor Pro Tem Judith Chandler
Councilor Nate Nassif
Councilor Carey Storm
Councilor Gloria Latimer

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT FOR ROLL CALL:

Councilor John Shada (Arrived at 6:02 PM)
Councilor Julie Wolfe (via Zoom arrived at 6:30 PM)

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

C. ROLL CALL

All of the City Council were present for the roll call, except for Councilors Shada and Wolfe.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilor Storm moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Nassif. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Note for the Record – Council Shada arrived at 6:02 PM.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Sally Fitzgerald, Manitou Springs Resident, recognized Mayor Johnson for receiving the Marcy Morrison Award. She expressed appreciation for the Mayor's leadership and noted the significance of the recognition within the community.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Presentation of Warrants
2. April 7, 2026 City Council Minutes
3. Contract Amendment between the City of Manitou and JR Engineering for the Ruxton Ave Project in the amount of \$76,000

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to approve the consent calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Storm. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

G. PRESENTATION

1. Monthly Financial Report

Senior Budget Analyst Nate Moore presented the monthly financial reports for the general fund, enterprise funds, and sales tax, noting they are available online for public access and will be presented monthly. He reported that expenditures are generally on track, with minor variances due to timing and one-time costs, and that revenues appear lower due to seasonal timing but are expected to align with the annual budget. Senior Budget Analyst Moore also noted that enterprise fund performance is consistent with expectations despite temporary impacts from the Hiawatha Lot closure, and that overall sales tax trends remain in line with budget projections.

There was a brief discussion about the Parking Enterprise Fund. Senior Budget Analyst Moore noted it should be monitored due to impacts from the Hiawatha Lot closure and the transition to a new system but stated there is no immediate concern. He confirmed that parking kiosks are on the way.

H. BUSINESS

1. Consideration Appointing Anjali Kapoor to the Housing Advisory Board

Alison Gerbig, Housing Advisory Board (HAB) Chair, introduced Applicant Anjali Kapoor, noting her participation in recent meetings and expressing appreciation for her thoughtful interest and enthusiasm for housing affordability.

Applicant Kapoor shared her background and motivation for applying, noting prior experience as an executive director for a transitional housing organization managing assets, real property, and a \$750,000 budget. She described her work in systems-based thinking, partnership building, and public-private collaboration. She stated she currently works at Catholic Charities managing a rapid rehousing program and expressed interest in contributing a systems-oriented perspective, asking questions that examine underlying values and long-term approaches to housing and community issues.

Councilor Nassif and Mayor Pro Tem Chandler expressed appreciation and commended Applicant Kapoor for volunteering to serve.

Councilor Nassif motioned to appoint Anjuli Kapoor to the Housing Advisory Board as an Alternate Member. The motion was seconded by Councilor Storm. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

2. Consideration of Resolution No. 1026, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs City Council Transferring Budgeted Expenditure Amounts Between Departments to Provide a Cost of Living Increase of Three Percent to Full-Time City Employees

City Attorney Jeff Parker clarified that the local government budget law does not apply to home rule jurisdictions. He explained that the City's charter allows transfers between departments, agencies, or funds to be approved by resolution, and confirmed that the proposed action complies with the charter.

Senior Budget Analyst Moore reviewed proposed budget reductions to offset the cost of the 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), including decreased digital accessibility compliance costs due to in-house staffing and reductions to professional services and planning staffing. He also outlined cuts to parks and recreation programs, seasonal staffing, and building maintenance. He noted that some tree trimming costs may be partially offset through fire mitigation efforts and that the municipal program donation to the school would not be funded this year. He stated that the combined reductions total approximately \$171,000.

Councilor Storm moved to approve Resolution 1026, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs City Council Transferring Budgeted Expenditure Amounts Between Departments to Provide a Cost of Living Increase of Three Percent to Full-Time City Employees. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Chandler. The motion carried (5-1) with Councilor Shada as the dissenting vote.

3. First Reading of Ordinance No. 0526, an Ordinance Adding Chapter 12.40 to the Manitou Springs Municipal Code Prohibiting Unpermitted Construction or Grading Work

Public Services Director Ben Schmitt stated that the ordinance reflects updates from the April 7, 2026 City Council meeting, noting that the primary addition was the inclusion of fine provisions.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to approve Ordinance No. 0526, an Ordinance Adding Chapter 12.40 to the Manitou Springs Municipal Code Prohibiting Unpermitted Construction or Grading Work and set second reading and a public hearing for May 5, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried (6-0).

4. Approval of Contract for Paving and Concrete Maintenance Projects Between the City of Manitou Springs and Trax Construction for \$512,600

Director Schmitt presented the proposed paving and concrete contract, explaining that roadway selection was based on pavement condition data. He outlined an updated approach that includes replacing curb, gutter, and drainage components in addition to asphalt, and utilizing full-depth reclamation to create a more durable roadway base. He noted that while costs per mile are higher, the method is expected to improve longevity and efficiency. Director Schmitt also reported that stronger-than-expected sales tax revenues from the Pikes Peak Regional Transportation Authority (PPRTA) may allow the project to proceed without the need for an advanced funding allocation.

Mayor Johnson noted that roadway costs have increased in recent years and asked whether the City is no longer using mobility and parking funds to supplement roadway work, as had been done in prior years.

Public Services Director Ben Schmitt confirmed that the City does not plan to rely on mobility and parking funds for roadway projects, stating that future work will be scoped to align with available PPRTA maintenance funding, with use of parking funds reserved only as a last resort.

City Administrator Denise Howell noted that after several years of addressing deferred maintenance, the City is making progress toward catching up, allowing greater reliance on PPRTA funding for roadway improvements moving forward.

There was a brief discussion about road access for residence during construction, specifically on streets such as Roca Street or Shoshone Place. Director Schmitt confirmed that local access will be maintained, including temporary driveway transitions during construction, and that staff will monitor conditions through regular meetings and ongoing communication to address issues promptly.

Councilor Storm moved to approve the contract for paving and concrete maintenance projects between the City of Manitou Springs and Trax Construction for \$512,600. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

5. Direction on Bill Bauers Open Space

Parks and Recreation Director Gillian Rossi requested direction from Council on potential development of Bill Bauers Open Space, including whether to proceed with a planned trail connection identified in the master plan. She noted that additional public comment had been received following the survey and stated that survey results, as interpreted by staff and the consultant, generally supported a low-impact, soft-surface trail through the area.

Note for the Record – Councilor Wolfe arrived at 6:30 PM.

Councilor Wolfe expressed disagreement with the interpretation of the survey results, stating that when combining responses from those who were neutral, or preferred funding be used for other priorities, they outnumbered those in favor of the trail.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler clarified the referenced survey data, noting that while about 37% of respondents supported the project, approximately 63% indicated a preference for other trail, open space, and trail maintenance priorities.

Councilor Storm shared that she views the proposed trail as a short but potentially costly segment due to terrain challenges. She suggested that the funding may be better directed toward protecting viewsheds through additional land acquisition within the City rather than constructing the trail.

There was a brief discussion about the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PARAB). Director Rossi confirmed that the Board had submitted a letter in support of the project prior to the survey.

Councilor Latimer inquired if the trail could be kept local. Director Rossi stated that it could potentially be kept local by not including it on maps, but that it would be difficult to keep it a local secret.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler expressed skepticism that the proposed route could function as a low-impact trail, noting site constraints including steep terrain and a stream corridor. She stated that not all open space needs to be developed into trails. She also referenced survey results indicating support for additional environmental impact studies but stated that, given estimated costs and current priorities, she would prefer to direct funding toward other open space and trail maintenance needs.

Mayor Johnson opened the floor for public comment at 6:37 PM.

Neale Minch, Manitou Springs Resident, requested that the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) stop further efforts to construct a trail from Crystal Park Boulevard through the canyon to Bill Bauers Park. He expressed concern that the area functions as an important wildlife corridor and stated that trail development, including potential off-leash dog use, could significantly impact wildlife. He recommended leaving the canyon undeveloped and suggested using open space funds instead for land acquisition and preservation efforts in other areas, including Black Canyon and Higginbotham.

Judy Carnick, Manitou Springs Resident, referenced her previously submitted letter regarding the Bill Bauers Open Space project. The letter summarized her concerns about potential impacts to nearby residents, wildlife, steep terrain, and safety, including a lack of connectivity at a key pinch point. She suggested that further study should be completed before funding is spent. Resident Carnick added concerns about the trail potentially being an attractive nuisance that could create a liability issue for the City. She expressed support for leaving the area undeveloped and suggested that removing

utility lines to preserve the natural viewshed would better protect the space and enhance wildlife habitat.

Mayor Johnson shared that an email was received from Manitou Springs Resident Rick Larson, who raised concerns regarding site conditions and feasibility, public safety, lack of a safe route to school, fiscal responsibility, ongoing obligations, environmental stewardship, and open space preservation. The email stated that the proposal does not meet reasonable standards of practicality, safety, sustainability, or necessity.

Additionally, a letter of support was received from PaCMan. The committee stated that the proposal supports a safe and accessible route to Manitou Avenue and schools, connects to existing trails, and advances OSAC goals. The letter also noted benefits including improved public safety, reduced fire risk, promotion of health and well-being, and protection of public investment and access.

Mayor Johnson closed public comment at 6:44 PM.

Councilor Wolfe stated that she did not believe liability concerns should be a determining factor in the decision-making process, due to the Governmental Immunity Act, which generally protects the City from liability for injuries on public trails.

There was a brief discussion about whether a wildlife survey had previously been considered. Director Rossi confirmed that it was discussed, but ultimately the priority became determining community sentiment before considering a formal study that would cost between \$9,000 and \$12,000.

Councilor Nassif stated that he is not interested in moving forward with the project at present, but would support integrating the project into the Parks, Open Space, and Trails (POST) Plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler opposed a trail in the area but supported designating it as a wildlife habitat and including it in the updated OSAC POST Plan.

Councilor Shada stated that a low-impact trail could be feasible in the area and noted that trail design could limit bicycle use. He expressed skepticism about claims that the trail would provide a practical route to school. He also stated that the project aligns with the current open space plan and expressed doubt that the area contains unique wildlife not already present in other neighborhoods.

Mayor Johnson agreed with Councilor Shada, stating that a basic pedestrian trail could be feasible but that additional factors should be addressed.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to postpone the development of Bill Bauers Open Space and include the development in the discussion of the master plan. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried (6-1), with Councilor Shada as the dissenting vote.

6. Action on Fire Mitigation Equipment Purchases and Fire Administrative Captain Position

Mayor Johnson noted that a thorough presentation on the fire mitigation equipment purchases and Fire Administrative Captain position had been provided at a previous Council meeting.

Fire Chief Keith Buckmiller confirmed that there were no updates since the prior discussion.

City Administrator Denise Howell shared that the City had received unofficial notice of a Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant award of approximately \$60,000 for sirens, with formal confirmation forthcoming.

Councilor Latimer noted that she inquired about sharing equipment between communities following the previous meeting and was advised that it is not a viable option, though personnel may be shared.

Councilor Storm moved to approve the proposed fire mitigation equipment purchases and Fire Administrative Captain position. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

I. HEARINGS

1. Public Hearing to Consider Issuance of a New Hotel and Restaurant Liquor License at 819 Manitou Avenue, Mahanakhon LLC, dba Manitou Thai & Ramen

Deputy City Clerk Kristen Dukoi outlined the liquor licensing hearing process, including staff presentation, applicant presentation, public comment, rebuttal, and final decision by Council acting as the Liquor Licensing Authority. She reported that the City Clerk's Office received a completed hotel and restaurant liquor license application for Mahanakhon LLC, doing business as Manitou Thai & Ramen. She noted that required materials were submitted, the premises was previously licensed without issue, the applicant holds a current license in Conifer with no concerns, the background check was clear, and no public comments or concerns had been received.

Applicant Somying Fox, and Owner of Mahanakhon LLC, shared that she was drawn to Manitou Springs after relocating to Colorado and had been seeking an opportunity to open a restaurant in the community. She expressed appreciation for the location, the character of the community, and stated her goal of bringing Asian cuisine and culture to serve both residents and visitors.

Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing at 6:58 PM. Due to no public comment, Mayor Johnson subsequently closed the public comment portion of the hearing.

Councilor Nassif moved to approve the issuance of a New Hotel and Restaurant Liquor License at 819 Manitou Avenue, Mahanakhon LLC, doing business as Manitou Thai & Ramen. The motion was seconded by Councilor Storm. The motion carried (7-0).

J. RECEIVE OR ACT ON COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler reminded the public that the City Council has its first Open Mic Night on April 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM. She encouraged community members to attend and participate, noting that Council looks forward to listening and supporting the community.

Councilor Wolfe stated that she consulted with City Attorney Parker regarding remote participation in executive sessions and was advised it would be permissible if a majority of Council agreed to waive a prior resolution restricting remote attendance. She confirmed she was in a private setting and requested approval to participate in the Executive Session included on the agenda.

Mayor Johnson noted that Council could vote to allow remote participation in the Executive Session but cautioned that doing so could set a precedent affecting boards and commissions. She also acknowledged that such participation is legally permissible.

City Attorney Jeff Parker explained that current policy prohibits remote participation in executive sessions unless in emergencies, but as an administrative policy, Council may waive it for a single instance or amend it by resolution. He clarified that “remote” includes any non–in-person participation and that the policy applies to Council as well as all boards and commissions.

Councilor Shada stated that remote participation in executive sessions is not uncommon, noting that experts and attorneys often join remotely. He expressed that confidentiality concerns can be addressed through proper precautions and emphasized the importance of maintaining decorum regardless of participation format.

City Attorney Parker advised that Council action requires a motion, second, and vote, and recommended formalizing the decision. He clarified that although the matter was not on the agenda, Council may vote on procedural matters that arise during the meeting and indicated there were no concerns with proceeding in this manner.

Councilor Shada moved to allow Councilor Wolfe to participate in the meeting’s Executive Session remotely. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Councilor Nassif shared that there is a Spreading Kindness event at the Manitou Art Center (MAC) on May 2, 2026 from 3:00 PM to 5:30 PM. He noted that approximately 80 people are signed up and encouraged others to participate.

Councilor Storm noted that there will be a Parking Public Engagement Meeting at Memorial Hall on Thursday April 23, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

Councilor Latimer reminded everyone that the Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Diamond Jubilee for their 75th Anniversary on April 30, 2026 at the Cliff House.

K. CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

City Administrator Howell reported on the following:

- Colorado Springs Utilities will be replacing the gas line on Waltham Avenue.
- The City is hosting a Parking Public Engagement Meeting on April 23, 2026 at 5:30 PM in Memorial Hall.
- Coffee with the City Administrator will be in Memorial Hall on April 22, 2026 at 7:00 AM.
- The Budget Survey will launch on Thursday, April 23, 2026. In-person Budget Public Engagement Meetings are scheduled for June 11 and June 13, 2026.

L. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. An Executive Session to hold a conference with the City attorney for legal advice pursuant to Section 5.1(c) of the City of Manitou Springs Home Rule Charter, concerning *Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company v. City of Manitou Springs, Colorado*, El Pasa County District Court Case No. 2025CV30766

Mayor Johnson read the purpose of the Executive Session into the record at 7:09 PM.


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

The City Council moved back to Regular Session at 8:51 PM. Mayor Johnson confirmed the Executive Session was held solely for the stated purpose and that no formal decision was made.

ADJOURN

With no other items to discuss, Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (7-0). The meeting adjourned at 8:51 PM.

Attest:



Natalie Johnson, Mayor



Elena Krebs, City Clerk

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