

CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS
CITY COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes
606 Manitou Avenue
May 19, 2026

The City Council of Manitou Springs met in Regular Session on Tuesday, May 19, 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 John Shada
Councilor Julie Wolfe
Councilor Nate Nassif
Councilor Gloria Latimer

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT FOR ROLL CALL:

Councilor Carey Storm (Excused)

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 Councilor Storm.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

E. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Johnson shared a video titled "Our Place in the Peaks" created by Manitou Springs Elementary School. She shared that 271 kids participated in the creation of the video, adding that the video includes a mural representing their vision of the community.

Jason Wells, Manitou Springs resident and owner of the Armadillo Ranch, submitted written comment and summarized the comments during the meeting. Wells expressed

support for the Police Chief's request for additional staffing during the annual Emma Crawford Coffin Races event and raised concerns about discussion of potentially reducing or canceling the event. He stated that the requested funding amount was modest in comparison to the sales tax revenue generated during the event and expressed the opinion that law enforcement costs associated with the event should be supported through the City's budget rather than the Chamber of Commerce.

Sean Thomas Gill, Manitou Springs resident, commented on the proposed increase in police staffing for the Coffin Races event and expressed concern about assigning those costs to the Chamber of Commerce. Gill stated that the additional staffing request represented a relatively small expense compared to City revenues generated during the event and expressed opposition to reducing or canceling the event. He described the Coffin Races as a long-standing, family-oriented event that supports local businesses and generates significant sales tax revenue for the City.

Kathryn Hughes, Manitou Springs resident and local employee, expressed support for the Coffin Races event and described it as an important source of income for local workers and businesses ahead of the slower winter season. Hughes stated that she viewed the event as positive and family-oriented and expressed support for law enforcement determining appropriate staffing levels for public safety. She also questioned why the additional policing costs were being discussed as a funding issue given the revenue generated by the event.

Eric Wilks, owner of Manitou Winery, expressed support for continuing the Coffin Races event and stated that the event is financially important for local businesses ahead of the slower winter season. Wilks described the event as an important part of the community's identity and culture and opposed the possibility of canceling the event.

Peter Sommers, Manitou Springs resident and owner of Coffin Captain, expressed disappointment over discussions about potentially canceling, postponing, or limiting the Coffin Races due to increased law enforcement costs. He emphasized the event's cultural and economic importance to the community, noted his efforts to support participation through coffin-building classes, and supported increased police presence while opposing measures such as ticketing or limiting attendance.

Johnathan Matas, Manitou Springs resident and owner Colorado Custard Company, echoed concerns about discussions regarding potentially canceling the Coffin Races. He emphasized the event's cultural and economic importance to the community, supported additional law enforcement as needed, and questioned why the requested funding could not be absorbed within the existing police budget. He also questioned why the event was being characterized differently from other large community events and stated that the Coffin Races have operated safely for decades while serving as an important source of revenue for local businesses.

Sean St. Pierre, Manitou Springs resident, spoke in support of continuing the Coffin Races, emphasizing the event's significance and magnitude as a major cultural and economic event for the community. He stated that the event is important to local businesses, the service industry, and community identity, and expressed opposition to suggestions of canceling the event or shifting additional law enforcement costs to local businesses. He urged Council to support continuation of the event and referenced the City's vision statement regarding community, culture, and wellness.

Julia Wright, Manitou Springs resident and cooperative member of Commonwheel Artists Co-op, spoke in support of continuing the Coffin Races, noting its long-standing role as a free, family-friendly community event that has evolved over time alongside other annual events in Manitou Springs. She stated that the Coffin Races are not an alcohol-focused event and described them as a creative, volunteer-supported tradition that attracts large, well-behaved crowds and contributes to local business activity during the fall season when tourism typically slows. She emphasized the event's value in attracting visitors who often return to support local businesses and expressed support for maintaining the event with appropriate security considerations.

Josephine Paradee, Manitou Springs resident, expressed support for continuing the Coffin Races and emphasized the event's importance to local workers and tourism-dependent businesses. She stated that the Coffin Races are a major annual draw that brings visitors to Manitou Springs ahead of the slower winter season, and that many guests specifically plan trips around the event. She noted that visitors contribute to local restaurants, retail, lodging, and service industry jobs, and that the event directly supports residents' ability to earn income during the winter months. She also spoke to the event's role in reflecting the community's identity and encouraged Council to consider its importance to workers and small businesses.

Annie Schmitt, Manitou Springs resident, business owner and member of the Visit Manitou Springs Board, summarized a discussion from a Visit Manitou Springs Board meeting in which law enforcement provided an update on security planning for the Emma Crawford Coffin Races. She stated that the Police Chief indicated a preferred staffing increase of approximately 10 officers and discussed associated costs, as well as concerns about crowd control and officer deployment patterns. She noted that alternative options, including private security, mounted officers, and coordination with regional event organizations and volunteer support, were raised during the discussion. She expressed concern that prior safety issues at the event were not identified and questioned why increased security needs were being elevated, stating that if additional officers are required, the costs should be covered within the Police Department budget.

Justin Snyder, owner of The Loft, commented on discussions regarding potential attendance caps, increased policing, and possible cancellation of the Coffin Races. He stated that the event is not a high-risk alcohol event, noting that alcohol consumption occurs within existing licensed establishments and not in open containers in the streets, and that past events have not shown a pattern of alcohol-related crime or crowd control

issues. He emphasized the event as a major community tradition and key economic driver for local businesses heading into the off-season. He supported maintaining public safety measures and acknowledged that additional officers may be appropriate given increased attendance but stated that the associated costs should not fall solely on the Chamber of Commerce and suggested the expense be covered within the City's police budget given the event's economic benefit to the community.

Rory Crosby, Manitou Springs resident and owner of Kinfolks, emphasized support for maintaining the Coffin Races as a long-standing community tradition and major tourism driver. He stated that the event brings significant visitor traffic to Manitou Springs, including first-time visitors who return to the community, and highlighted its importance to local small businesses and the city's tax base. He expressed concern about shifting event-related public safety costs to the Chamber of Commerce, stating that the Chamber should not be financially burdened for municipal expenses. He further stated that limiting or scaling the event could negatively impact business growth and tourism revenue, and urged the City to support, rather than restrict, major community events that contribute to economic vitality.

Elena Arana, Manitou Springs resident and business owner, expressed opposition to potentially canceling or limiting attendance at the Coffin Races. She described the event as an important free, family-oriented tradition for local residents and stated that it provides significant economic benefit to the community during a slower tourism season. She acknowledged the Police Department's desire for increased security but stated that the City and Police Department should work together to address related costs without eliminating or restricting the event. She further stated that canceling the event would negatively impact families, local businesses, and the broader community.

Hallie Gurba, Special Events Coordinator for Visit Manitou Springs, expressed concerns about the discussion surrounding the 2025 Coffin Races and stated that she had not been directly included in prior discussions regarding event security. She noted that she had attended meetings where event operations and security could have been discussed. Coordinator Gurba described the Coffin Races as a free, family-friendly event that attracts visitors from across the country and internationally and emphasized the event's economic and community value. She stated that she supported discussing additional safety measures but expressed concern about discussions regarding limiting or canceling the event. She encouraged continued collaboration and communication regarding event planning and security.

Michelle Whetherhult, Manitou Springs resident, noted several new businesses that had recently opened or were expected to open in Manitou Springs. She stated that the Coffin Races serve as an important event before the slower winter season and emphasized the event's economic importance to local businesses. Whetherhult shared that she had previously participated in the event as Emma Crawford and felt safe attending the races. She stated that visitors travel to Manitou Springs specifically for the

event and expressed concern that canceling the Coffin Races would negatively impact the community and local businesses.

Linda Morlan, Manitou Springs resident, encouraged residents to attend City meetings and remain engaged in local government. She stated that elected officials and City staff represent and work for the residents of Manitou Springs. Morlan also expressed support for the Coffin Races.

Melanie Blades, Manitou Springs resident, spoke in support of the Coffin Races and noted that attendance has grown in recent years. She questioned the need for additional security given the event's history without major incidents, while acknowledging the importance of public safety at large events. Blades stated that residents help look out for one another and described the community as welcoming and supportive of visitors. She also expressed concern about discussions regarding potentially canceling the event.

Bryan Engle, Manitou Springs resident and owner of Southwest Silver, expressed support for the Coffin Races and shared his long personal connection to the event and the community. He stated that the Coffin Races represent the culture and identity of Manitou Springs and noted the event's national exposure through media coverage. Engle expressed his desire for the tradition to continue for future generations.

James, owner of the Townhouse, spoke in support of the Coffin Races and stated that businesses involved with the event already provide security at key event locations. He expressed that additional police presence was unnecessary and noted his personal experience participating in the event, as well as his professional Military background working in collaboration with law enforcement. James stated that the event is community-oriented and not an alcohol-focused event, and he opposed shifting additional security costs to local businesses or the Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Johnson reminded the public about upcoming community engagement opportunities, including Coffee with the City Administrator at 7:30 AM, and a Chamber of Commerce meeting at 8:30 AM on May 20, 2026, as well as the upcoming City Council Open Mic Night at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, May 26, 2026. She stated that the Coffin Races discussion is currently scheduled for the June 9, 2026 agenda, subject to change, and encouraged continued public correspondence and feedback.

Note for the Record – The City Council took a break at 7:07 PM and reconvened at 7:23 PM.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Presentation of Warrants
2. May 5, 2026 City Council Minutes
3. Authorization for Professional Services Agreements for Program Manager for Capital Projects between the City of Manitou Springs and Nomatix, LLC and Chavez Consulting

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

G. PRESENTATION

1. Monthly Financial Report

Senior Budget Analyst Nate Moore reviewed budget performance through the first four months of the year and noted that total expenditures remain below the projected year-to-date budget percentage due to departments being mindful of spending. He stated that overall expenses were relatively unchanged compared to the same period in the previous year. He also reviewed sales tax revenue trends, noting a decline compared to the prior year that was anticipated following changes to marijuana laws in Colorado Springs. Despite the decrease in sales tax revenue, total revenues are only modestly lower overall. Senior Budget Analyst Moore stated that staff will continue monitoring revenue trends moving forward but did not express immediate budget concerns.

Mayor Johnson noted that \$593,000 was transferred to the General Fund. Senior Budget Analyst Moore confirmed that the transfer was planned for, with an anticipated total of \$1,500,000 to be transferred for the whole year and that \$500,000 came from the Mobility and Parking Fund.

There was a brief discussion regarding the increase in judicial and executive expenditures, in which Senior Budget Analyst Moore explained the judicial increase was primarily salary-related. He noted that some judicial salary costs are expected to be shifted to the Finance Department based on financial work that is being done in the Judicial Department. He added that there is greater budget capacity in Finance and that the shift is expected to address the increase moving forward. Senior Budget Analyst Moore shared that some executive costs appear to be timing-related, including computer-related expenses and, while slightly above the year-to-date benchmark, are not currently a concern.

There was a brief discussion about Specific Ownership Tax. Councilor Shada explained that the tax is related to car registrations and values. City Administrator Denise Howell added that the rate is set and collected by the County, and then funds are sent to the City.

There was a discussion about the “Other in City” and “Outside City” categories in the sales tax report. Senior Budget Analyst Moore explained that “Outside City” includes online purchases and sales made outside City limits, while “Other in City” captures taxable activity that does not fit standard category groupings. Councilor Shada added examples, noting that outside-city sales can include online retailers such as Amazon or out-of-city purchases delivered locally, and explained that “Other in City” consists of miscellaneous businesses that do not fit neatly into defined categories. He also briefly referenced how certain sectors, such as lodging, are taxed separately.

Councilor Wolfe raised concerns about the classification of funds transferred from the Mobility and Parking Fund to the General Fund, stating that enterprise funds are restricted in how they may be used and should be accurately labeled according to their allowable purposes, such as parking-related or street-related uses rather than general administrative support.

City Administrator Howell stated that the allocation is used for street and mobility-related purposes and explained that the City can demonstrate that the enterprise funds are being spent appropriately. City Administrator Howell shared that the Finance Director originally booked the expenditure under administrative support and that it will likely remain unchanged in the current year. She added that any reclassification would require discussion with auditors and review of prior practice.

There was a general discussion about how the sales tax reports are generated, in which Senior Budget Analyst Moore explained that the sales tax information takes two months to get to the City, and confirmed that the report presented during the meeting covered January through March.

Senior Budget Analyst Moore reported that the audit is on schedule to be completed by early July, before the budget meeting.

There was a discussion about funds going out. Senior Budget Analyst confirmed that \$466,842 went to the Capital Improvement Fund so far in 2026 and that two of the four quarterly payments to the Chamber of Commerce have been paid from economic development.

2. Proclamation No. 0726, A Proclamation Recognizing the Dedicated Service of Police, Fire, and Public Services Personnel

Mayor Johnson read Proclamation 0726 into the record, recognizing the service of Police, Fire and Public Services Personnel.

Public Services Director Ben Schmitt, Commander Corey Sevene, and Fire Captain Randy Perkins thanked Council for the recognition and acknowledged the dedication of City staff. Director Schmitt emphasized the significant amount of unseen work and public service performed behind the scenes by employees who consistently go above and beyond in serving the community. Commander Sevene expressed appreciation for

the recognition of the Police Department and its work. Captain Perkins thanked Council on behalf of both paid and volunteer fire personnel, noting that the department's volunteers play an essential role in supporting the Fire Department and the community.

H. BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Resolution No. 1226, A Resolution Authorizing the Adoption of the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan

Planning Director Fred Rollenhagen presented the draft resolution approving the Regional Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, a regional plan updated every five years by the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM) in coordination with El Paso County and eight participating jurisdictions. He explained that the plan is intended to reduce disaster-related risks to people, property, the economy, and the environment, and that adoption by each participating jurisdiction is required to maintain eligibility for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hazard mitigation funding programs. Director Rollenhagen noted that City staff from multiple departments participated throughout 2025 in developing the updated plan, which includes regional hazard and risk assessments, mitigation strategies, and plan maintenance procedures. He explained that the City is required to provide annual updates to PPROEM regarding progress on mitigation action items. He further noted that Volume 2 contains the City of Manitou Springs annex, including the City's community profile, risk assessment, and 29 mitigation action items addressing identified hazards, including wildfire mitigation, which were updated from the 2020 regional plan and aligned with the City's 2023 local hazard mitigation plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler requested that the City Council receive copies of the annual reports required by PPROEM, so that the Council can stay updated.

PPROEM Director Andrew Notbohm explained that the plan is not required to be fully implemented within the five-year planning period but instead serves as a roadmap for identifying natural and man-made hazards and developing mitigation strategies while maintaining eligibility for FEMA funding and post-disaster assistance. He noted that PPROEM coordinates and maintains the regional plan, while participating jurisdictions are responsible for implementing mitigation strategies. Director Notbohm stated that the regional plan includes 182 mitigation strategies, including 27 action items for Manitou Springs, and emphasized the importance of planning with the community to address local risks and concerns.

There was a discussion about critical facilities located in hazardous areas. Director Rollenhagen confirmed that City Hall and the City Pool are located in the floodplain and stated that the Water Treatment Plant may also be an area of concern.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to approve Resolution No. 1226, A Resolution Authorizing the Adoption of the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

2. Consideration of Resolution No. 1426, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs City Council Approving a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning a Multi-Jurisdictional Land Management Collaboration in the Vicinity of The Ring-The-Peak Trail

City Administrator Howell introduced the proposed non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Ring-the-Peak project. She explained that the Colorado State Wildlife Division had previously addressed questions during a work session and that the City Attorney had reviewed the agreement. City Administrator Howell stated that the MOU would allow the partnership to continue working toward the long-discussed Ring-the-Peak project and noted that a binding agreement is anticipated to return to Council within approximately one year.

Councilor Latimer moved to approve Resolution No. 1426, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs City Council Approving a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning a Multi-Jurisdictional Land Management Collaboration in the Vicinity of The Ring-The-Peak Trail. The motion was seconded by Councilor Wolfe. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

I. RECEIVE OR ACT ON COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler reminded everyone that City Council Open Mic Night is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2026 at 5:00 PM and noted that the Public Services Director will be in attendance. She suggested that there be a discussion regarding how Open Mic Night feedback is handled during the next Open Mic Night.

Councilor Latimer shared that Colorado Springs Utilities and the Manitou Springs Fire Department recently hosted a wildfire mitigation program at the high school. She noted that the program included helpful information on FireWise landscaping practices and fire-resistant plant materials and provided handouts from the presentation. She added that it is City Clerk Week and recognized the City Clerk for her dedication and hard work.

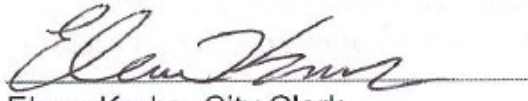
J. CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

City Administrator Howell reported that due to the weather the Hiawatha Gardens Project has fallen a little behind schedule and the project will be worked on weekends to catch up. She also shared that the City has installed new parking signs with Quick Response (QR) codes. City Administrator Howell announced that Citizen's Academy Graduation is on Thursday, May 21, 2026, followed by a tree planting at the Library.

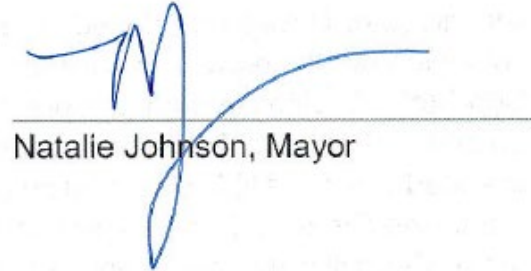
ADJOURN

With no other items to discuss, Councilor Shada moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (6-0). The meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Attest:



Elena Krebs, City Clerk



Natalie Johnson, Mayor

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