

**CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS
CITY COUNCIL**

Regular Meeting Minutes
606 Manitou Avenue
August 18, 2026

The City Council of Manitou Springs met in Regular Session on Tuesday, August 18, 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
Councilor Judith Chandler
Councilor John Shada
Councilor Julie Wolfe
Councilor Nathan Nassif
Councilor Carey Storm
Councilor Gloria Latimer

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

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

E. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Karl Stang, Manitou Springs Resident, commented on the traffic calming discussion from the July 21, 2026, City Council meeting. He emphasized that traffic safety concerns extend beyond speeding to include aggressive and excessively loud driving and stated that additional work is needed. He noted that public concerns about e-bike safety largely relate to e-motos rather than legal e-bikes and provided a flyer explaining the differences between the three classes of legal e-bikes and e-motos. He also encouraged Council to consider a resolution supporting consistent enforcement of existing state law regarding e-bikes and e-motos.

Manitou Springs Creative Alliance (CRANE) Vice Chair Ralph Routon announced the final public art installation of the year, *Wellspring*, will be installed at the Dillon Mobility Hub in September. He stated that CRANE will host a community celebration and artist recognition event, combined with Cookies with CRANE, on September 17, 2026.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. August 4, 2026 City Council Meeting Minutes

Note for the Record – This item was pulled from the consent calendar as requested by Councilor Wolfe.

2. Presentation of Warrants
3. Request to Change Lisette Casey from an Alternate to Regular Member of the Manitou Arts, Culture, and Heritage Board

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to approve the consent calendar as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Storm. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

F1. August 4, 2026 City Council Meeting Minutes

Councilor Wolfe requested a correction to the first paragraph under item I2, Approval of Settlement Agreement with the Manitou and Pikes Peak Railroad Company, to clarify that the tax incentive agreement was originally approved in 2018, not the settlement agreement.

Councilor Wolfe moved to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

G. PRESENTATION

1. Colorado Springs Utilities Waterline Cathodic Protection Project Plan for Fall 2026

Bill Bolch, Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) Account Manager, provided an overview of a cathodic protection project scheduled to begin in September on Ruxton Avenue. He stated that the project will involve approximately 200 potholes along a raw water line and is expected to take approximately 60 days. He explained that work and equipment will be removed each day so the road can remain open, with at least one lane of traffic maintained using flaggers. He added that CSU is developing a traffic plan and intends to hold a community meeting before the project begins. CSU will return in September to provide additional information.

There was a discussion about parking during the project. CSU Account Manager Bolch stated that some on-street parking may need to be temporarily removed in narrower

areas to maintain a lane of traffic. He added that CSU is working with the City to identify alternate parking arrangements.

Councilor Latimer commended CSU's community meeting for the Waltham Avenue project and encouraged a similar approach for the Ruxton Avenue project. She expressed concern about potential traffic impacts and cautioned against using Capitol Hill, Waltham Avenue, or Pilot Knob as detours.

CSU Account Manager Bolch explained that the work will proceed section by section, with approximately four to seven holes completed each day. He added that the project will extend the useful life of the 24-inch raw water line, which was installed more than 90 years ago, before future decisions are made regarding its repair, replacement, or relocation.

There was a discussion about potential noise from the project. CSU Account Manager Bolch stated that drilling would generate some noise and that the intent is to conduct the work during daylight hours on weekdays. He noted that the exact work schedule, including the number of days and hours per day, has not yet been determined.

There was a brief discussion about filling the potholes associated with the project. CSU Account Manager Bolch stated that CSU typically performs this work but could potentially utilize a subcontractor.

2. Visit Manitou Springs Q2 2026 Update

Visit Manitou Springs Executive Director Jenna Wells provided an overview of the organization's second-quarter activities and recent tourism data, highlighting increased visitor center traffic, marketing engagement, and approximately \$182,000 in earned media value in 2026. She noted the decline in Wine Fest attendance and its impact on vendors and local tax revenue, as well as efforts to monitor and address the trend. Executive Director Wells shared that 53% of visitors are accessing outdoor recreation spaces, making outdoor recreation a primary driver of visitation. She also emphasized the new EarthCam and the 2025 Coffin Races receiving a Silver Telly Award. She concluded by introducing the "Do Manitou Springs Right" destination stewardship campaign, which promotes responsible visitation and community stewardship.

There was a discussion about the nationwide decrease in alcohol consumption and potential non-alcoholic options at Visit Manitou Springs events. Executive Director Wells stated that non-alcoholic options are being considered for Wine Fest, while noting that the event is limited to Colorado wine producers. She added that the Heritage Brew Festival will offer several non-alcoholic options in 2026.

Executive Director Wells also stated that Visit Manitou Springs is considering reducing the Wine Fest ticket price and adjusting its marketing strategy to increase attendance while continuing to support returning vendors.

Executive Director Wells reported that Visitor Center traffic varies by season, with nearly 200 visitors per day during the summer and nearly 100 visitors per day in mid-August, with higher weekend traffic. She noted that the Mineral Springs are a significant draw, stating that many visitors are already familiar with the Mineral Springs Tasting Cups and self-guided tour, and that Tasting Cup sales nearly match daily Visitor Center visitation.

There was a discussion about Visit Manitou Springs memberships. Executive Director Wells stated that Visit Manitou Springs currently has 227 active members, including several new businesses that have joined in 2026. She noted that membership rates vary by business type and average \$300 annually, with payment plans available. She added that membership rates have remained at the same level for the past 18 months.

There was a brief discussion about Manitou Springs' inclusion in various tourism and lifestyle publications. Executive Director Wells noted that the City's outdoor recreation opportunities, small-town atmosphere, and destination appeal align with the audiences of those publications.

Executive Director Wells confirmed that Visit Manitou Springs has four full-time positions, one full-time position for CRANE, two part-time weekend positions, one part-time bookkeeper position, and one social media contract position.

3. Monthly Financial Report

Finance Director Nate Moore presented the January through July 2026 financial report. He reported that expenditures were slightly above the percentage of the fiscal year completed due in part to the timing of quarterly insurance payments and noted that there were no significant concerns. He shared that sales tax revenue is trending upward and that parking revenue has been increasing in the summer months, with enterprise expenditures below the percentage of the fiscal year completed. He noted that June sales tax revenue was higher than the previous year and stated that the City remains on track to meet its budgeted sales tax revenue of \$4,900,000.

H. BUSINESS

1. Authorization to Purchase Wildfire Mitigation and Emergency Response Equipment

Fire Chief Keith Buckmiller shared that the Fire Department is requesting the purchase of a truck, trailer, and drone. He explained that the recently approved Bobcat and burn box require a heavy-duty trailer and vehicle for transportation. Regarding the purchase of a new versus used vehicle, he expressed concern about the unknown maintenance history of a used work truck and the potential for costly repairs. He recommended purchasing a new vehicle with a warranty, noting the maintenance costs avoided under the warranty on the Department's recently purchased ambulance.

There was a discussion about the need for a new vehicle to support the Fire Department's biochar and mitigation operations. Fire Chief Buckmiller clarified that the equipment could be used without a new truck but would require a heavy-duty vehicle for transportation. Fire Administrative Captain Randy Perkins added that using the existing brush truck to tow the burn box could place additional strain on the vehicle and noted that the mitigation crew has had to borrow a Public Services truck to transport materials from recent mitigation projects.

Councilor Latimer inquired about whether the Fire Department would rent equipment to other entities to recoup costs.

Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that Council approval would be required before the equipment could be made available to other entities and noted related liability concerns.

There was a discussion about the Fire Department's projected costs for the truck, trailer, and drone and whether the expenses would exceed the \$690,000 previously approved by City Council. Fire Administrative Captain Perkins stated that the projected expenses were within the approved amount, with the remaining \$197.53 expected to be covered by a mitigation budget line item. He confirmed that payroll and benefits through the end of the year were included in the projection. He also reported that the mitigation crew is now fully staffed and that no significant additional expenses are anticipated.

Councilor Wolfe stated that members of the public had questioned whether deploying Fire Department equipment to other communities could make the equipment unavailable for local use and delay the City's wildfire mitigation efforts.

Fire Administrative Captain Perkins clarified that the Department does not plan to make its equipment available to other communities without first seeking Council direction. He explained that the Department does plan to deploy crews and equipment to emergency incidents when requested and that such deployments are reimbursed, including maintenance costs for deployed equipment. He noted that when individual personnel are deployed without Department equipment, the City does not receive the same reimbursement benefit.

Fire Chief Buckmiller explained that the mitigation crew would be the first Fire Department resource deployed when assistance is requested, as the requesting community would be responding to an active emergency while the City's crew would be performing preparedness and mitigation work. He noted that equipment used in such deployments would be reimbursed to the City and that local mitigation work could be adjusted to accommodate the deployment.

There was a brief discussion about current and future mitigation projects. Fire Administrative Captain Perkins confirmed that mitigation work was completed at Washington Avenue and Sunshine Trail, as well as behind 7 Minute Spring Park. He added that mitigation at Serpentine Drive has begun and is anticipated to take two weeks or longer.

Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that the mitigation team will conduct patrols to identify areas of greatest risk and prioritize mitigation efforts based on life, property, and comfort. He noted that areas identified as high risk, such as Serpentine Drive, would receive higher priority, and that newly identified areas of concern would be assessed and prioritized accordingly.

There was a discussion about whether the mitigation team's patrols would update the previously presented map of high-risk areas. Fire Chief Buckmiller explained that much of the risk identified on the map is associated with topography and slope on private property, where the City does not have authority to conduct mitigation work. He stated that the Department will focus its mitigation efforts on risks located on City property.

Councilor Storm inquired about mitigation of the overgrown area near the Sinclair gas station along Manitou Avenue that is under Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) jurisdiction and could affect emergency egress.

Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that CDOT permission had not yet been obtained and that the Department would work to coordinate with CDOT. He emphasized the importance of emergency egress given the City's geography and explained that the proposed drone would support preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts. He stated that the drone would help the Department assess fuel conditions and topography in areas that may be difficult to access, identify wildfire locations more quickly, and support mitigation planning. He also noted that the drone could provide additional capabilities through equipment payloads and assist with emergency response and recovery activities.

City Administrator Denise Howell noted that the City's bi-weekly newsletter provides detailed updates on completed and upcoming Fire Department mitigation activities.

There was a discussion about other fire departments using similar drones. Fire Chief Buckmiller identified Colorado Springs Fire Department, Colorado Springs Search and Rescue, and El Paso County Search and Rescue as agencies using drones for various public safety purposes.

Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that the proposed drone would provide longer flight time, payload capabilities, geospatial mapping, fiber optics, and additional fire modeling technology. He explained that the Department's existing drone has limited flight time, cannot carry additional payloads, and cannot assess fuel conditions on hillsides.

Fire Administrative Captain Perkins added that the parachute system will allow the new drone to operate over crowds when authorized. Fire Administrative Captain Perkins explained that the proposed drone could be programmed with Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates received from dispatch and fly directly to the specified location, whereas the existing drone requires the pilot to search for the location manually.

Fire Chief Buckmiller described the proposed drone as a tool to improve community safety by supporting wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and response. He stated that it would help the Department assess hillside fuels and model potential fire movement, as well as provide more rapid and precise information about a fire's location and intensity. He noted that this information could support faster response and help prioritize limited aerial firefighting resources. Fire Chief Buckmiller added that additional features are available at an added cost, but the Department is selecting what it considers the most prudent features for the cost.

There was a discussion about the drone's collision avoidance capabilities and how the Department would respond if another drone were operating in the same area. Fire Chief Buckmiller explained that the proposed drone has internal collision avoidance and that compatible platforms can coordinate with one another. He stated that if an unrelated drone were operating in the area, one of the drones would need to land due to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements. He added that the Department does not currently have the ability to interfere with or disable another drone's signal.

Fire Administrative Captain Perkins stated that he would obtain more information regarding a warranty and get the information to the Council.

City Administrator Howell stated that the City is developing a mailer for residents addressing fire mitigation, evacuation, and related preparedness information. She noted that funding is being identified for the mailer, which is expected to be distributed within the next month.

Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that the Department could have the drone within a month.

Fire Administrative Captain Perkins added that the proposed drone could also support Police Department operations by tracking individuals during searches and using infrared capabilities to locate people or animals in areas that may be difficult to see.

Fire Administrative Captain Perkins explained that all drone operations must be conducted by Fire Department personnel with FAA Part 107 certification. He noted that the Department currently has four qualified pilots.

There was a discussion about utilizing the drone for the Emma Crawford Coffin Races. Fire Chief Buckmiller stated that the Department could use the drone for pre-event planning and during the event for surveillance, intelligence, and response. He noted that the drone could help identify potential hazards and evacuation areas and provide an additional layer of situational awareness during the event. He added that, if the new drone is not available by the time of the Coffin Races, the Department could use its existing drone, although FAA restrictions would limit its operation around crowds.

Councilor Storm moved to approve the purchase of wildfire mitigation and emergency response equipment. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Chandler. The motion carried (7-0).

Note for the Record – The City Council took a break at 7:22 PM and reconvened at 7:40 PM.

2. Consideration of Resolution No. 1726, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement between the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and the City of Manitou Springs Regarding the Conduct of a Coordinated Election on November 3, 2026

City Clerk Elena Krebs explained that the resolution is routine and required by state law for jurisdictions participating in a coordinated election. She stated that the resolution authorizes the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the County Clerk and designates the City's Designated Election Official (DEO).

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler moved to approve Resolution No. 1726, A Resolution of the City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement between the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and the City of Manitou Springs Regarding the Conduct of a Coordinated Election on November 3, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilor Storm. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

3. Consideration of Resolution No. 1826, A Resolution Submitting a Ballot Issue to the Registered Electors of the City of Manitou Springs at the City's November 3, 2026 Regular Election to Permit the City Council to Increase the City's Excise Tax on Ticket Sales and Admission Fees by up to an Additional Four and Three On-Hundredths Percent (4.03%)

Mayor Johnson introduced Resolution No. 1826, submitting a ballot issue to the registered electors at the November 3, 2026 regular election regarding an increase to the City's excise tax on ticket sales and admission fees. She noted that the proposed language would allow an increase of up to 4.03% and that an alternate version prepared by Councilor Wolfe would provide for a specific 4.03% increase.

City Attorney Jeff Parker confirmed that both options are legally permissible and that the decision is at the discretion of City Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Chandler recalled that similar language was used when Council considered increasing the marijuana sales tax and asked whether allowing an increase of "up to" a specified amount would allow the City to make future changes without another ballot measure. City Attorney Parker confirmed that this was generally accurate.

Councilor Wolfe stated that the proposed increase is smaller than the excise tax increase considered in 2025 and would bring the excise tax in line with the sales tax. She expressed concern that allowing a range could result in future Councils being asked to reduce the tax and could create the perception of preferential treatment for businesses subject to the excise tax.

Councilor Storm agreed with Councilor Wolfe and expressed support for the specific 4.03% increase.

Councilor Latimer stated that Councilor Wolfe's version was simpler and easier for voters to understand. She expressed concern that the language in lines 7 and 8 of the original version could be confusing.

Councilor Shada stated that he supports the alternative version, noting that the language is clearer and that the intent is to make the amusement tax consistent with the sales tax. He agreed that a specific tax rate would reduce the potential for future political pressure on Council to adjust the tax.

Councilor Nassif stated his support for the specific tax increase.

City Attorney Parker explained that the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) requires an estimate of the revenue expected to be raised in the first year of the tax to be included in the ballot language. He clarified that the estimate applies only to the first year and is intended to provide voters with information about the expected revenue.

Mayor Johnson stated that she had received approximately 60 signatures from community members supporting the excise tax increase. She noted that, while the additional revenue is needed, it would not fully address the City's budget deficit.

Mayor Johnson moved to approve Resolution No. 1826, A Resolution Submitting a Ballot Issue to the Electors of the City of Manitou Springs at the City's November 3, 2026 Regular Election Directing the Manitou Springs City Council to Increase the City's Excise Tax on Ticket Sales and Admissions Fees by an Additional Four and Three One-Hundredths Percent (4.03%) as amended. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Chandler. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

There was a brief discussion about activities Council may undertake following approval of the ballot measure. City Attorney Parker explained that, under the Colorado Fair Campaign Practices Act, City funds, resources, staff, and time cannot be used to advocate for or against the measure. He noted that individual Council members may engage in advocacy on their own time and with their own resources, and that Council may adopt a resolution stating its position on the ballot measure. He added that City staff may provide neutral, factual information in response to public questions.

I. RECEIVE OR ACT ON COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

Councilor Wolfe shared concerns raised by residents about incomplete pothole repairs following the Waltham Avenue project and asked whether the City Code requires CSU to repair a larger section of roadway when work damages a City street.

City Administrator Howell stated that the requirement is not currently in the City Code and that CSU is required to repair only the areas affected by its work.

Councilor Wolfe requested confirmation of the applicable requirements and suggested that Council may want to consider the issue before the upcoming Ruxton Avenue project.

Councilor Latimer clarified that the roadway issues on Waltham Avenue involved several large, patched sections rather than typical potholes. She also raised concerns about missed trash and recycling pickups and asked when the Republic Services contract would be reviewed. Councilor Latimer emphasized the need for better communication with residents about missed and rescheduled pickups, particularly due to concerns about trash being left out overnight.

City Administrator Howell stated that the City plans to issue a Request for Proposals for trash services at the beginning of the 2027. She encouraged residents with concerns to contact her so she could coordinate with Republic Services.

Councilor Latimer raised concerns about vacant and abandoned buildings that may be falling into disrepair and potentially creating hazardous conditions. She referenced Ordinance No. 1317, Chapter 6.75, concerning vacant or abandoned buildings and requested that the Planning Department review whether the existing provisions could address the concerns without the need for a new ordinance. She specifically referenced the former bottling plant, the 7-Eleven building, and some residences.

Mayor Johnson noted that a letter drafted by Bicycle Colorado regarding the marketing of electric motorcycles as e-bikes had been shared with Council. She also reported that the Manitou Springs Spa Condo Association is applying for a Colorado State Historical Fund grant to maintain and repair the mineral spring located within the building and requested a letter of support from City Council.

City Administrator Howell noted that the City had met with the Spa Condo Association and that an easement would likely be needed for the mineral spring to be considered public, as it is currently located on private property. She requested additional time to discuss the matter with the Mineral Springs Foundation and further consider a potential easement before Council provides a letter of support.

There was a discussion about whether the Spa Condo Association's grant application could affect the City's ability to receive grant funding for future projects. City Administrator Howell explained that the City is not planning to apply for funding through the program in 2026. She noted that if both the City and the Association applied in the same cycle, the City could be asked to prioritize its applications.

J. CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

City Administrator Howell announced that the Fire Department will be open to the public on Saturday August 22, 2026 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM to allow the public to meet the crew, learn about their work, and view the new equipment.

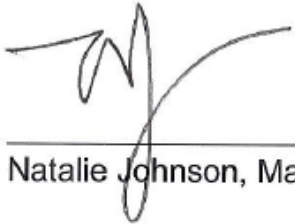
ADJOURN

With no other items to discuss, Councilor Wolfe moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Latimer. The motion carried unanimously (7-0). The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Attest:



Kristen Dukoi, Deputy City Clerk



Natalie Johnson, Mayor

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