

City Council Minutes
February 23, 2026
6:00 PM
Council Chambers

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Crestview City Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor JB Whitten. Council members present: Brandon Frost, Shannon Hayes, Dusty Allison, and Sylvester Echols. Also present: City Manager Jessica Leavins, City Clerk Natasha Peacock, City Attorney Jonathan Holloway, and various staff members. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Capps was not in attendance for this meeting.

2. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Sara Searfross led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Open Policy Making and Legislative Session

Mayor Whitten declared a quorum present, with Mayor Pro Tem Doug Capps excused.

4. Approve Agenda

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve the Agenda.

Motion by Council member Hayes and seconded by Council member Frost to approve the agenda, as presented.

Roll Call: Ayes: Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Sylvester Echols, Dusty Allison. All ayes. Motion carried.

5. Presentations and Reports

5.1. Friends of the Library Update — Paul Farnsworth

Mr. Paul Farnsworth, President of the Friends of the Crestview Library, presented an update to the Council. He noted that the organization is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered with the State of Florida and whose primary mission is to promote and support the Robert L.F. Sykes Library and meet community needs by encouraging library use, with a current membership of 58.

Mr. Farnsworth highlighted the organization's accomplishments for fiscal year 2026, which included funding and serving refreshments for the library's Noel Night event; purchasing a popcorn machine and snow cone machine for library and city-wide Parks and Recreation use; purchasing and assembling three picnic tables on the library grounds; acquiring a display case that significantly increased the circulation of items previously hidden from patron view; purchasing sensory boards for the children's area; funding lunch for library staff during

countywide training; and funding a high school diploma scholarship through the Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative. Total expenditures for fiscal year 2026 were approximately \$13,000.

Mr. Farnsworth stated that the organization raises the majority of its funds through biannual book sales, which require significant volunteer effort to sort, box, store, and transport books. He reported that the most recent book sale was the organization's most successful to date.

Mr. Farnsworth informed the Council that the organization's primary challenge going forward is securing permanent, climate-controlled storage for book inventory, as the current arrangement at the community center is no longer available. He estimated storage costs at approximately \$3,000 per year and asked for the City's assistance in identifying a permanent solution that would serve both the City's and the organization's needs.

Mayor Whitten commended Mr. Farnsworth on the organization's accomplishments and noted his personal history with the original Friends of the Library organization. He stated that any outstanding issues regarding storage would be addressed during the City Manager's report.

6. Consent Agenda

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Frost requested that item 6.1 be pulled for discussion.

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve Consent Agenda items 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4.

Motion by Council member Allison and seconded by Council member Hayes to approve Consent Agenda items 6.2–6.4, as presented.

Roll Call: Ayes: Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Sylvester Echols, Dusty Allison. All ayes.
Motion carried.

Mayor Whitten called for discussion of Consent Agenda item 6.1.

Council Member Frost asked for clarification on item 6.1. City Manager Jessica Leavins clarified the matter.

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve Consent Agenda item 6.1.

Motion by Council member Allison and seconded by Council member Frost to approve Consent Agenda item 6.1, as presented.

Roll Call: Ayes: Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Sylvester Echols, Dusty Allison. All ayes.
Motion carried.

6.1. WWTP Fencing

6.2. ECSC Utilities for Southwest Crestview Bypass Change Order #3

6.3. Okaloosa County Tax Collector Gas Line Easement

6.4. Falcon Roadway Style Patch Truck Purchase

7. Public Hearings / Ordinances on Second Reading

8. Ordinances on First Reading

9. Resolutions

10. Action Items

10.1. City Clerk Employment Agreement

City Attorney Jonathan Holloway provided background on the City Clerk position, noting that the City of Crestview transitioned to an appointed City Clerk when the form of government changed in 2019. The first appointed City Clerk served from November 2022 until November 9, 2025. Natasha Peacock served as Deputy City Clerk and then as Interim City Clerk to ensure continuity of the Office. At the Special City Council meeting on January 20, 2026, Ms. Peacock was among three candidates selected to interview for the City Clerk position. Following that process, the Council appointed Ms. Peacock as City Clerk and approved contract negotiations between the City Manager, City Attorney, and Ms. Peacock. Mr. Holloway stated that the proposed employment agreement is included in the agenda packet and is formatted for greater clarity than the previous City Clerk's contract, though similar in overall terms.

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve the employment agreement for the City Clerk.

Motion by Council member Frost and seconded by Council member Hayes to approve the employment agreement for the City Clerk, as presented.

Roll Call: Ayes: Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Sylvester Echols, Dusty Allison. All ayes. Motion carried.

11. City Clerk Report

12. City Manager Report

12.1. Financial Update — Finance Director

Finance Director Gina Toussaint informed the Council that the financial presentation includes the January disbursements and the income and expense report for the month of December 2025. Also provided is the cash carry forward schedule for the quarter ending December 2025, which

reflects an unrestricted cash balance of \$7 million. Ms. Toussaint stated that she would be happy to answer any questions. There were none.

12.2. City Manager Updates

City Manager Jessica Leavins began by thanking Mr. Farnsworth for his presentation and expressing appreciation for his spirit of cooperation. She stated that she intended to meet with him following the meeting to discuss future plans. Ms. Leavins clarified that it was never the City's intention for the Friends of the Library to vacate their storage space within five days and emphasized the desire to work collaboratively toward a permanent long-term plan.

Ms. Leavins updated the Council on the school speed zone cameras. The cameras are fully installed and are currently in a warning-only phase. The next planned installation is at Davidson Middle School, and the City is working with all relevant agencies on the permitting process.

Ms. Leavins informed the Council that the City is currently transitioning Foxwood Estates and Foxwood Addition to city utility services. She noted that while Foxwood Estates is within city limits, the Foxwood Addition is not. She requested Council approval to waive the utility deposit and out-of-city fee for the first ninety (90) days for customers transitioning from county service, as the county will be refunding their deposits but not on a timeline that aligns with customers beginning city service.

Mayor Whitten called for action to approve waving the deposit and out-of-city fee for transitioning Foxwood customers for the first ninety (90) days.

Motion by Council member Hayes and seconded by Council member Echols to approve waiving the deposit and out-of-city fee for Foxwood Estates and Foxwood Addition customers transitioning to city utilities for the first ninety (90) days.

Roll Call: Ayes: Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Sylvester Echols, Dusty Allison. All ayes.
Motion carried.

12.3. Monthly Council Report — Community Development

City Manager Jessica Leavins presented the monthly Council report for the Community Development Department. She updated the Council on new projects approved, including a new Chick-fil-A, a brewery on Main Street, and other new developments.

Mayor Whitten asked if the Council had any questions for the City Manager.

Council Member Hayes asked the City Manager to elaborate on Senate Bill (SB) 180. Ms. Leavins explained that SB 180 restricts what cities can do with respect to development regulations. She noted that the bill was originally intended to assist communities struck by multiple hurricanes in rapid succession, where the law was preventing homeowners from rebuilding after devastation. Although that situation did not apply to Crestview, the City remains subject to the same restrictions. In practical effect, the bill prevents municipalities from imposing new restrictions on development and has been interpreted very broadly. Numerous lawsuits have been filed statewide, both by cities challenging the law and by developers

challenging local restrictions. The City has exercised caution and has not joined any of those lawsuits. Ms. Leavins noted that Senator Gaetz is proposing legislation that would provide relief from these restrictions and restore local governments' ability to address development in their communities.

13. Comments from the Mayor and Council

Mayor Whitten asked for comments from the Council.

Mayor Whitten welcomed Council Member Echols, noting that he had missed his first meeting, and invited him to share any comments. Council Member Echols stated that he was glad to be on the Council, expressed enthusiasm to learn, and thanked the Council for their support.

Council Member Hayes stated that he was glad to be present.

Council Member Frost offered brief comments regarding the Winter Olympics.

Mayor Whitten informed the Council about upcoming events related to the America 250 commemorative programming.

14. Comments from the Audience

Ms. Sara Searfross thanked the elected officials who attended the recent town hall meeting and extended an invitation to the next meeting. She provided an update on other agencies active in the city.

Mayor Whitten thanked Ms. Searfross for hosting the town hall but noted that future invitations to elected officials would need to go through proper channels so that participation by one or more elected officials could be appropriately noticed.

Mr. Mitchell addressed the Council regarding the upcoming Regional Area Medical (RAM) health event, to be held at the high school in May, and noted that volunteers are needed.

15. Adjournment

Mayor Whitten adjourned the meeting at 6:38 p.m.

Minutes approved this 27th day of April, 2026.



JB Whitten

Mayor



Natasha S. Peacock, City Clerk CMC
Proper Notice having been duly given