

Oak Harbor City Council
Workshop Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2026

This was both a physical meeting location and a virtual meeting. Meeting was viewable via YouTube at www.youtube.com/cityofoakharbor, on Facebook, and following the meeting on Cable Channel 10/HD 1090

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Wright called the workshop meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

City Council Present:

Mayor Ronnie Wright
Mayor Pro Tem Tara Hizon
Councilmember Bryan Stucky
Councilmember Eric Marshall
Councilmember Christopher Wiegenstein
Councilmember Barbara Armes
Councilmember James P. Marrow
Councilmember Sandi Peterson

Staff Present/Videoconference

City Administrator Sabrina Combs
Deputy City Administrator David Goldman
Public Works Director Steve Schuller
Human Resources Director Emma House
Community Development Director Stacie Pratschner
Police Chief Tony Slowik
Fire Chief Travis Anderson
Executive Services Coordinator Macalle Finkle
Communications Officer Magi Aguilar
City Clerk Julie Nester

Also in attendance: City Attorney
Hillary Evans of Kenyon Disend, PLLC

MAYOR

Mayor Wright welcomed all in attendance. He noted all members of the Council were present. Mayor Wright observed public comments are not normally taken at workshop meetings, although the Council may allow or request public participation on action items. There were several action items on the agenda today.

Mayor Wright requested a moment of silence in remembrance of Chaplain David Lura who passed away this week. Chaplain Lura was a much-loved member of the community and will be missed.

Mayor Wright offered his congratulations to the National Football League Champion Seattle Seahawks on their victory over the Los Angeles Rams.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

City Administrator Combs reported that her usual monthly report would resume in February.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Wright reiterated there were several items for action on the agenda today. He noted that in order to move forward on a majority of the City's Advisory Board, Commission, and Committee

appointments, the original agenda was updated and re-posted prior to 1:00 p.m. yesterday to reflect approvals of which the Council has had no questions. Mayor Wright noted he moved action on the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission appointments to the February 3, 2026 regular Council meeting in order to take into consideration any outcome from the Council's discussion regarding nepotism on today's agenda.

a. Action Item: Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting – Council Retreat of January 8, 2026

Mayor Wright thanked City Clerk Nester for providing these minutes with a much higher than usual level of detail after the recording equipment did not fully record a portion of that off-site meeting. He called on the Council for any comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Hizon thanked City Clerk Nester for producing minutes that went above and beyond.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Hizon moved to approve the minutes of the City Council special meeting – Council Retreat of January 8, 2026. Councilmember Marrow seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Action Item: Re-Appointments: Arts Commission, Positions 3 and 5

Mayoral re-appointments to the Arts Commission of Robert Sanders, Position 3, and Cynthia Mason, Position 5, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Hizon asked if the names of the appointees could be read. City Clerk Nester read each aloud.

Motion: Councilmember Marrow moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointments to the Arts Commission of Robert Sanders, Position 3, and Cynthia Mason, Position 5, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Councilmember Wiegenstein seconded the motion.

Mayor Wright called for any discussion.

Councilmember Stucky inquired in the case of re-appointments whether staff liaisons to the advisory groups bring anything to the Mayor's attention regarding those serving. Mayor Wright confirmed this.

With discussion concluded, Mayor Wright called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

c. Action Item: Re-Appointments: Community Police Advisory Board, Positions 1 and 5

Mayoral re-appointments to the Police Community Advisory Board of Melinda Buchanan, Position 1, and Martin Malloy, Position 5, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments.

Councilmember Peterson provided her respective questions and comments.

Motion: Councilmember Marshall moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointments to the Police Community Advisory Board of Melinda Buchanan, Position 1, and Martin Malloy, Position 5, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Councilmember Marrow seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

d. Action Item: Re-Appointments: Historic Preservation Commission, Positions 1 and 3

Mayoral re-appointments to the Police Community Advisory Board of Gideon Cauffman, Position 1, and Nick Hamden, Position 3, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

Motion: Councilmember Marrow moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission of Gideon Cauffman, Position 1, and Nick Hamden, Position 3, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Councilmember Marshall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

e. Action Item: Re-Appointment: Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, Receiver 1

Mayoral re-appointment to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee of Allenda Jenkins, Receiver 1, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

Motion: Councilmember Wiegenstein moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointment to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee of Allenda Jenkins, Receiver 1, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Mayor Pro Tem Hizon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

f. Action Item: Re-Appointments: Marina Advisory Commission, Positions 1, 3, and 7

Mayoral re-appointments to the Marina Advisory Commission of Cathy Proses, Position 1, J.J. Jones, Position 3, and Louie Foster, Position 7 for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

Motion: Councilmember Armes moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointments to the Marina Advisory Commission of Cathy Proses, Position 1, J.J. Jones, Position 3, and Louie Foster, Position 7, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Councilmember Marrow seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

g. Action Item: Re-Appointments: Planning Commission, Positions 1 and 3

Mayoral re-appointments to the Planning Commission of Jeffrey Ward, Position 1, and Cody Bakken, Position 3 for a term of January 2026 through December 2027.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

Motion: Councilmember Peterson moved to confirm the Mayoral re-appointments to the Planning Commission of Jeffrey Ward, Position 1, and Cody Bakken, Position 3, for a term of January 2026 through December 2027. Councilmember Marrow seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro Tem Hizon noted these were all re-appointments but there were still a number of vacancies on the City's advisory Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and asked what the City is doing and what the Council should perhaps be doing to solicit more volunteers.

Mayor Wright noted that in addition to posting openings on the City's website, openings and how to apply for them were discussed at the Wright Blend coffee and conversations with the Mayor each

month, included at Council meetings and that staff follows up with anyone the City hears could be interested.

City Administrator Combs noted the appointments to the Planning Commission were an example of this, and that even former City employees could volunteer.

Communications Officer Aguilar reported the City is also doing outreach with the Oak Harbor High School regarding student representatives to many of the advisory groups.

Councilmember Marrow voiced the need for a targeted approach for qualified volunteers.

Mayor Wright reiterated his appreciation for all the members of the Council and their viewpoints. He noted he was disheartened watching the last Council meeting and reminded the Council to please address their questions to the Chair and not to another Councilmember and encouraged better communication, especially on the dais.

h. Discussion Item: Draft Ordinance: Adopting Oak Harbor Municipal Code Section 2.65.140 (Nepotism) relating to Boards, Commissions, and Committees

City Attorney Evans presented the discussion item. The Council discussed whether there should be any prohibition on nepotism with regard to appointees to advisory boards, commissions, and committees at their January 6, 2026 regular meeting and at their January 8, 2026 special meeting - Council Retreat.

At the regularly scheduled City Council meeting on January 20, 2026, the Council voted to postpone action on board and commission re-appointments to the January 27, 2026 workshop. The Council requested that staff include in that workshop a discussion of a potential ordinance regarding nepotism as it relates to service on the City's advisory boards, commissions, and committees by members of a City Councilmember's and how best to regulate such relationships.

City Attorney Evans reviewed two potential options for a draft ordinance for Council discussion. She noted the Council could expand or narrow the definition of what constitutes a relative. If, following discussion, the Council determines that they wish to move forward, an item for Council action may be placed on the February 3, 2026 regular meeting agenda.

Section 1 - Option 1

- 1) The city council will not appoint or confirm appointments of relatives of city council members to boards, commissions, committees, or other appointed positions.
- 2) "Relative" means spouse or domestic partner, child, step-child, parent, step-parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, son- or daughter-in-law, brother- or sister-in-law.

Section 1 – Option 2

- 1) No city councilmember shall serve on the same advisory board as a relative.
- 2) No city councilmember may vote on the appointment of or to confirm appointment of a relative on any board, commission, or committee.

3) The city council will not appoint or confirm appointments of relatives of city council members to the Salary Commission or the Civil Service Commission.

4) "Relative" means spouse or domestic partner, child, step-child, parent, step-parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, son- or daughter-in-law, brother- or sister-in-law.

Attorney Evans noted that if the Council wishes to pursue an ordinance related to nepotism, the Council may also wish to consider its effective date - whether it would go into effect immediately (potentially impacting the ability for sitting members to continue their current terms), beginning the next terms for each board or committee member, or some alternate date in the future to allow the City time to seek replacements for board members impacted by the ordinance.

Mayor Wright called on the Council for any comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Hizon and Councilmembers Armes, Peterson, Stucky, Marshall, Marrow, and Wiegenstein provided their respective questions and comments.

City Attorney Evans, City Administrator Combs, Human Resources Director House, and Mayor Wright responded to Council questions and comments.

With discussion concluded, City Attorney Evans noted she will create two versions of Option 2, one to include additional language in regard to prohibiting a relative serving on an advisory Board, Commission, or Committee serving as that group's chair, and one without that language. She will also use the definition of relative that is included in the City's Employee Policy Manual under Family leave and Bereavement. The two versions will be brought back to the Council for further consideration in February.

Mayor Wright thanked all for the discussion.

Mayor Wright invited Councilmembers to provide any updates on the City's boards, commissions or committees on which they serve as a Council liaison.

Councilmembers Armes, Stucky, and Marrow provided updates.

Councilmember Armes reported on the Marina's receipt of salmon fingerlings on January 21, 2026 from the hatchery in Marblemount. Feedings for the salmon will be every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 9:30 a.m. The public is welcome to attend.

Councilmember Stucky noted services for Chaplain Lura will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, at the Oak Harbor Lutheran Church. On a happier note, he reported that the new Whidbey Camano Islands Tourism interlocal agreement is finished and will be making its way through all participating municipalities for approval.

Councilmember Marrow reported that Ms. Cynthia Mason of the Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation had contacted him regarding posting poetry inside the Island Transit buses. He noted he was certain their might be rules or regulations regarding what can or cannot be displayed. Councilmember Marrow noted that Island Transit was in dire straights in the past but was much better with new management and funding.

Mayor Wright suggested having Ms. Mason attend a meeting of the Island Transit Board to address them regarding poetry.

COMMUNITY PARTNER PRESENTATIONS

a. Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation – Memorandum of Understanding Proposal

The Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation President Cynthia Mason provided a presentation for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Foundation is seeking to establish a framework for cooperation in supporting the arts in Oak Harbor and in the development of a performing arts center and makers' space. This MOU would also establish a process for obtaining Washington State's designation of a Creative Arts District.

Ms. Mason also provided this presentation to the Arts Commission in December. A draft of the MOU has been reviewed by City legal counsel. She explained that the Creative Arts Foundation viewed this as a vehicle to deepen the relationship between them and the City. Ms. Mason reported they are working with an out-of-state firm on a feasibility study for a performing arts and events center. She introduced Commission member Lynn Goebel and Director Margaret Croom who were in attendance.

Ms. Mason noted in the Council's workshop packet was a draft MOU, which was reviewed and edited by the City Attorney. She explained the ultimate goal is for the Creative Arts Foundation to collaborate with the Arts Commission for supporting the arts in Oak Harbor. She noted a similar collaboration exists between The Center and the Oak Harbor Senior Center Foundation. The proposed MOU will be brought forward for Council consideration in February.

Mayor Wright thanked Ms. Mason for her presentation. He called on the Council for any comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Hizon and Councilmembers Marrow, Peterson, Marshall, Stucky, and Wiegenstein provided their respective questions and comments.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

a. Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan 2026-2030

Fire Chief Anderson provided a draft of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), which has been rewritten to align with current state requirements and operational best practices. The revised CEMP will be brought back to City Council on February 3, 2026 for formal consideration and approval. The proposed CEMP has been reviewed by the City Attorney.

State law requires the City of Oak Harbor to establish and maintain a local emergency management organization and to develop, maintain, and submit a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) that is consistent with the State of Washington's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The CEMP is required by state law to be reviewed and updated every five (5) years to ensure continued compliance and alignment with state requirements.

Fire Chief Anderson presented an overview of Emergency Management at the March 25, 2025 City Council Workshop. During the presentation, Chief Anderson discussed the State of Washington requirement to submit an updated Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) every five (5) years and noted that the City of Oak Harbor's CEMP update was required to be completed by January 2026.

The Emergency Management Plan prepared by the Director of Emergency Management and promulgated by the Mayor serves as the City's official emergency management plan. This plan must be maintained, filed with the Office of the City Clerk, and distributed to appropriate City departments to

ensure coordinated and effective emergency preparedness, response, and recovery across the organization.

Fire Chief Anderson also included information regarding the shared use of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with Island County. Chief Anderson outlined challenges associated with operating under differing EOC organizational structures and managing potential conflicts between separate Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans during multi-agency incidents.

The last CEMP was completed fifteen (15) years ago. Chief Anderson has edited the current CEMP to remove conflicting language and to add language regarding Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC). He reported a new CEMP needs to be completed in the next cycle or sooner and that the City first needs to decide how we partner with Island County and leverage resources. The City of Oak Harbor and Island County both have limited resources and personnel available to fill operational and leadership roles during a disaster. In certain situations, it may be beneficial to combine resources and establish a MAC Group to manage large-scale incidents that impact both the City and the County.

The determination to establish a MAC Group will be made by the Mayor, in coordination with the Oak Harbor Emergency Services Director, and in partnership with the Island County Board of Commissioners. The MAC Group offers executive-level, strategic guidance for disaster response, focusing on high-level decision-making, prioritization of scarce resources, and overall response direction rather than tactical field operations.

The MAC Group will provide recommendations and direction to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Manager-who shall be a qualified individual from either Oak Harbor or Island County Emergency Services. The EOC Manager is responsible for implementing MAC Group direction, coordinating overall response operations, and ensuring an effective, unified effort across all participating agencies. The EOC team will consist of Oak Harbor employees, Island County representatives, and any professional or volunteer organizations identified as having essential roles in the response effort.

Chief Anderson reviewed the make-up of the Oak Harbor Policy Group, an executive-level body that provides strategic policy guidance and support for disaster response. This group focuses on high-level decision-making and the overall direction of the response, rather than on-the-ground tactical operations.

- Mayor of Oak Harbor
- Oak Harbor City Council
- Oak Harbor City Administrator
- Oak Harbor Finance Director
- Oak Harbor City Attorney
- Oak Harbor Police Chief
- Oak Harbor Fire Chief
- Oak Harbor Public Works Director
- Oak Harbor City Clerk

Fire Chief Anderson outlined other necessary key changes to align with Federal requirements and best practices include:

- Remove Command language from EOC (EOC is support).
- Activation levels (brought in line with FEMA).
- Incorporated Community Lifelines.
- Updated Chart of Responsibility.
- Created Emergency Support Function 2.1- Cybersecurity

Next Steps:

- Draft CEMP will be brought back for adoption.
- Further discussion with Island County to discuss EOC and staffing.
- Continue to do more EOC and ICS training for city staff.
- Complete an annual exercise to test or training and plan.

Councilmember Marrow thanked Chief Anderson for his presentation and provided this respective questions and comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Mayor Wright adjourned the workshop at 3:00 p.m.

Certified by Julie Nester, City Clerk