

City of Wendell
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2026

Mayor Rebecca Vipperman called the regular meeting of the Wendell City Council to order at 6:30 PM. Council members present were Council President BJ Marshall; Councilwoman Carolyn McRoberts; Councilman Juan Gonzales and Councilman Donald Dunn. City Attorney Tim Stover was not present. Attorney Shayne Nope attended in his place.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Councilwoman McRoberts made a motion to approve the April 2, 2026, regular council meeting minutes, as presented. Councilman Dunn seconded the motion. Councilwoman Marshall- Aye, Councilwoman McRoberts- Aye, Councilman Gonzales- Aye and Councilman Dunn- Aye; motion passed.

BILLS

Councilwoman McRoberts made a motion to approve the bills as presented in the amount of \$21,703.29. Councilman Dunn seconded the motion. Roll call vote taken; Councilwoman Marshall-Aye, Councilwoman McRoberts- Aye, Councilman Gonzales- Aye and Councilman Dunn- Aye; motion passed.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(Public Works/Clerk-Treasurer/Fire/Police/Library/Ordinance)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Special Use Permit-ETS Management, LLC

Mayor Vipperman opened the public hearing at 6:47 PM. She introduced the topic to be discussed and explained the rules of conduct to those present who may want to comment on the topic of this public hearing.

Code Enforcement Officer Nathan Lewis stated that ETS Management, LLC, on behalf of Gooding County, submitted a special use permit to install a 100 ft. self-supporting lattice tower at 100 E Ave A. He also directed the council to the site plan located on page 8.

Chad Larsen, a contractor for the build out and here on behalf of Gooding County, stated that in the application are the stamped plans for a 100 ft. self-supporting lattice tower as part of Gooding County's CPF Broadband Grant. The placement at the City/Rural Fire Department location will provide dual purpose use of the tower: it will provide wireless service to citizens from a central location and allow the fire department to use the tower for training (rope rescue, etc.).

Mayor Vipperman asked the council if they had any questions, comments, or anything to discuss.

Councilman Dunn asked for clarification of the tower height. Chad Larson confirmed that it

would be 100 ft., which allows for more installations and increased access to more homes. The grant requires a minimum number of addresses that the tower must be able to reach. **Councilman Dunn** stated that both the height and location were undesirable.

Jacob Johnson, representing ETS Management, LLC stated that the goal of the broadband grant is to reach as many addresses as possible with the available funds. He stated that the service will be affordable and improve access for underserved members of the community. He added that the city could also use the tower to install equipment to improve operations, such as remote water meter reading if the system were upgraded. He explained that open access would support Wi-Fi, TV, radio, cable, and other communications, with the tower serving as a central hub for fiber connections.

Mayor Vipperman asked if there were alternative locations for the tower. **Jacob Johnson** stated that alternative locations had been investigated but would exceed the grant budget. The current location is central to existing communication networks, making it ideal and cost-effective.

Councilwoman Marshall stated that Wendell received a broadband grant in 2020 (White Cloud). During that process, the city was kept informed at each stage and included in many aspects of the project. She stated that this tower's height and location were never discussed with the city prior to the Special Use application and expressed concern about a general lack of communication from ETS. **Jacob Johnson** acknowledged that the plans are available online but agreed that communication could have been better. **Councilwoman Marshall** asked if the tower would provide service for those not on fiber. **Jacob Johnson** confirmed that it would, explaining that fiber would serve downtown while wireless service would extend coverage to outlying homes.

Councilwoman McRoberts asked who would own the tower. **Jacob Johnson** stated that the tower will belong to Gooding County. **Councilwoman McRoberts** asked about costs for additional users or companies wishing to place equipment on the tower. **Jacob Johnson** stated that costs would likely be limited to the company's equipment and installation. He added that a portion of the service fee (approximately \$30 per month per user) would go toward maintenance, equipment upkeep, and addressing outages.

Councilman Dunn asked what ETS Management would do if the tower was not approved and relocation was required. **Jacob Johnson** stated that the company would likely appeal the decision and re-evaluate more expensive alternative locations previously dismissed.

Councilman Dunn stated that it felt a lot like the city did not have much choice in the location of this tower.

Councilwoman Marshall asked about using the existing tower at the City's water tower. **Jacob Johnson** stated that this option had been evaluated but was deemed unsafe due to the number of existing devices. He also noted that using an existing or alternative site would increase costs due to leasing, engineering, and additional infrastructure required to connect to the existing network. He reiterated that the proposed location and tower height are ideal for connectivity, cost savings, and coverage. **Councilwoman Marshall** stated that the situation feels like the city

is “between a rock and a hard place” due to the lack of communication. **Jacob Johnson** responded that he did not want the city to feel that way but emphasized that the proposed location is critical to the project’s success. He added that there is an agreement with Rural Fire, with grant funds allocated for placement at the fire station.

Councilman Gonzales stated that “Exhibit A,” referenced in the application, was not included and that the application appears incomplete without it.

Mayor Vipperman stated that she has met with ETS on several occasions, when the hut was built, and a tower was never mentioned. **Jacob Johnson** responded that the tower was still in the planning stages at that time. **Chad Larsen** added that during lease discussions with Rural Fire, it was agreed that both Rural and City Fire could use the tower for training. He also stated that placing the tower near the nexus connection site simplifies integration with existing infrastructure.

Councilwoman McRoberts asked about site security. **Jacob Johnson** stated that the site will be enclosed by a 6 ft. fence and that the tower will not be climbable without specialized equipment. **Councilwoman McRoberts** asked about inspections of the tower and site. **Jacob Johnson** stated that there would be quarterly inspections, weed mitigation, routine maintenance, and customer service support.

Attorney Shayne Nope, representing the City of Wendell, stated that while the City is named in the agreement with Rural Fire, the agreement itself is only with Rural Fire. He noted that if the City is named, the agreement should also provide benefit to the City.

Mayor Vipperman asked if the Clerk’s Office had received any responses from the public. **Code Enforcement Officer Nathan Lewis** stated that thirty-two certified notices were sent. Twenty-eight were successfully delivered, one was undeliverable, and none were refused. Two written responses were received, both neutral, both indicating no comment. **Mayor Vipperman** asked if there were any additional written comments. **Code Enforcement Officer Nathan Lewis** stated there were none.

Mayor Vipperman asked the council if they had any additional questions. There were none.

Mayor Vipperman opened the public hearing for public comment.

In Favor:

None

Neutral:

None

Opposed:

Chris McRoberts stated that he is all for technology and people being able to access/use

technology, but it sounds like the cart before the horse with the city's feet to the fire. If denied, it takes money away from Rural Fire.

Jeff Houck stated that he has been in city limits for 33 years and lived in the area for 36 years. He stated that he and his partner were the first to bring internet to the area in 1995. He stated that he has some objections.

#1. The city and citizens have spent time and effort to beautify Wendell. Visual appeal affects people deciding whether to move to an area or not.

#2. The tradeoff is more access for the city and more technology, but visual appeal of the area is still important.

He also had some questions. Who is in control of this project and location? Who controls who can co-locate on the tower? What else is planned? Who pays for what? Who is the upstream provider?

He also stated that he does not like the fact that no tower was mentioned before and wonders what else is planned, the city already has one cell tower in town. This is a quiet residential area.

Rebuttal:

Jacob Johnson thanked the council and community members and apologized for any perception that the city lacked choice. He stated that changing the tower location would require amending funding to secure a new site. He explained that the project is federally funded and coordinated with surrounding counties to serve underserved areas, with this region receiving significant funding. He explained that building near an existing nexus of connections is preferred for efficiency. Radio frequency coordination is handled by the FCC, and co-location is generally open, usually only requiring equipment purchase and installation. He stated that at least six upstream providers will be involved in preventing monopolies and that the tower is expected to serve approximately seven hundred addresses.

Chad Larsen clarified for **Councilman Gonzales** that Exhibit A, though not labeled, corresponds to pages 1–5 of the ETS documents attached to the application.

Mayor Vipperman asked the council if they had any additional questions, comments, or anything to discuss. There was no discussion. **Mayor Vipperman** closed the public hearing at 7:50 PM.

NEW BUSINESS (discussion/action items)

Consideration of Dairy Days Parade

Mayor Vipperman introduced the item. **Mayor Vipperman** stated that she had forwarded the council an email received from ICRMP regarding coverage of the parade. The parade would be covered 100% if sponsored by the city. After a brief discussion, **Councilwoman Marshall** made a motion approving the City of Wendell to sponsor the 2026 Dairy Days Parade. **Councilman Gonzales** seconded the motion. Roll call vote taken; **Councilwoman Marshall-**

Aye, **Councilwoman McRoberts-** Aye, **Councilman Gonzales-** Aye and **Councilman Dunn-** Aye; motion passed.

Consideration of Special Use Application-ETS Management, LLC

Mayor Vipperman introduced the item. After reviewing the application, staff report, testimony, and applicable standards of Section 5-1-9(C), the Council discussed compliance with Section 5-1-9(C)(2) regarding consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Section 5-1-9(C)(3) regarding compatibility with the character of the surrounding area. **Councilwoman Marshall** read the applicable standards into the record:

2. Will be harmonious with and in accordance with the general objectives or with any specific objective of the Comprehensive Plan and/or the Zoning Ordinance.
3. Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area.

Councilman Gonzales made a motion to approve the Special Use Permit application conditional on attorney approval. **Councilman Dunn** seconded the motion. Roll call vote taken; **Councilwoman Marshall-Nay, Councilwoman McRoberts- Nay, Councilman Gonzales- Nay** and **Councilman Dunn- Nay**; motion failed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS (discussion/action items)

Consideration of Tree Removal-251 E Avenue A

Mayor Vipperman introduced the item. The citizen at this address was not available to attend the meeting. Tabled.

PUBLIC COMMENT

McKenzie Ross and **Sandra Gonzales** requested more bicycle racks in the city. They suggested locations such as the two city parks and the swimming pool. **McKenzie Ross** stated that she had done some research and found that pricing was inconsistent and that they would also have to be installed. **Sandra Gonzales** stated that she noticed a lack of racks while on a recent bicycle ride around town. **Mayor Vipperman** stated that she would talk to a company she is familiar with and see what can be done. **Sandra Gonzales** stated that she hopes it will encourage more bicycle riding and people to get outside more often.

Sandra Gonzales stated that tomorrow is the 21st Century Program. She would like to bring up a maximum of fifty school-age kids to tour City Hall between 9:30 am to 11:00 am. She stated that she would be happy to lead the tour and would appreciate any available help with the tour.

COUNCIL

Councilwoman Marshall stated that today has been a long day for everyone, with Public Works crew has been fixing water issues all day and tonight's meeting. She expressed her thanks to all city officials and thanks to all city employees, especially Public Works. She also expressed her appreciation for **Mayor Vipperman**, the council members, and **Attorney Shane Nope**.

Councilwoman McRoberts stated that she heard great comments from the kids about recent events in Wendell.

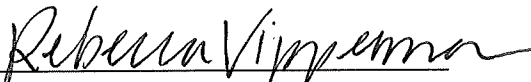
MAYOR

Mayor Vipperman expressed her appreciation for the Public Works Department and their hard work. She noted that during a recent water line break, the crew worked throughout the day after working the night before, in adverse weather conditions including rain, wind, and standing water, to complete the repair.

She announced that Wendell's Annual Spring Clean-Up will begin on April 20, with large dumpsters available at the water tower site. Alley clean-up is scheduled for April 27, and residents are asked to have items placed in alleys by April 26. She also noted that a dumpster for tire disposal (up to four tires per household) would be available at the City Shop. The cleanup event will conclude on May 1.

Adjourn

Councilman Gonzales made a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Wendell City Council at 8:15 PM. **Councilman Dunn** seconded the motion. Motion passed.


Rebecca Vipperman, Mayor

Attest:


Karri French, City Clerk/Treasurer