

City of Grass Valley  
Regular City Council Meeting Minutes  
March 3, 2025, 7:00 PM  
Grass Valley Market Annex  
Minutes

**Present:** Christian Ayles – Mayor; Samantha Allen – City Administrator; Bonne Whitley – Councilmember; ReeElla von Borstel – Councilmember (via online); Tom Rolfe – Councilmember (via online) Rick Whitacker – Councilmember; Joann Duarte – Councilmember (phone)

**Absent:** Rita Wilson – Council President;

**Guests Present:** Ed Hodges (Curran- McLeod), Michelle Colby MCEDD, Clint Moore, Meinrad Kuettel, Leta Ann Reckmann, Mike Bichler and Julie Clodfelter.

**Call to Order:**

Mayor Christian Ayles called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Consent Agenda:**

- The Mayor requested a review of the agenda.
- **Motion:** Bonne Whitley moved to accept the agenda as presented. Rick seconded.
- **Result:** Motion passed unanimously.

**Speaker Presentations with Updates**

**Grass Valley Wastewater Project Update- Edward Hodges (Curran-McLeod)**

- He has been assisting with the Grass Valley wastewater project for the past four years.
- In 2022, a **feasibility study** was conducted for a city-wide wastewater system using a conventional piping system. The plan included a sanitary lagoon and spray irrigation component on leased farmland.
- Initial project cost estimates were **\$6.5 million**, with funding sources identified from the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), DEQ, and congressional allocations.**
- Due to an updated census, Grass Valley no longer qualifies for **CDBG funding**, necessitating a city **income survey with a high response rate (90%)** to requalify.
- Current project cost estimates have increased to approximately **\$8 million**. Alternative funding sources, including Rural Development (USDA), are being explored.
- If additional grants are secured, residents' monthly costs could be reduced from **\$76 to approximately \$50.**
- Two grants are currently under consideration:
  - **Wastewater Planning Grant (\$100K):** Funds planning, design work, environmental and archaeological studies.
  - **Clean Water Technical Grant (Business Oregon):** Updates the city's water master plan, a requirement for future funding opportunities.
- **The City Council will review and decide on these grants.**

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**(MCEDD) Update- Michelle Colby**

- MCEDD assists Grass Valley in **securing funding** through its contract with Sherman County Court.
- Announced that the **Brownfield Revitalization Assistance Program** would provide **environmental site assessment** and other services that will aid owners of public and private properties located in Sherman County and other local counties. It runs from now through **September 30, 2027**, and is also available to assess and **remove underground storage tanks free of charge**.
- **March 20, 11 AM:** Legislative update meeting with **LOC**.
- Small City Allotment Grant opportunity was discussed for street improvements.

**Approval of Minutes:**

- The Mayor requested approval of the February meeting minutes.
- **Motion:** Bonne moved to approve the minutes; ReeElla seconded.
- **Result:** Motion passed unanimously.

**Financials**

- **Motion:** Bonne moved to accept the financials; Rick seconded.
- **Result:** Motion passed unanimously.

**Walter's Maintenance Report**

1. **CXT Bathroom Door Repair:** Locks and parts have arrived, but additional parts are needed.

**Late Payments for Water Service:** Overdue residents have paid; late notices will now be sent after two months of non-payment.

**Old Business**

**City Income Survey:** The March deadline is no longer applicable; the new application deadline is in the fall.

**Manufactured Home Property Update:** Septic approval received; **permits are being processed**. The owner to provide **monthly updates** via Sam, or council check-ins.

**CXT Door Repair:** Walter is working on locks replacements ; **new doors may be required (\$2,400 each)**.

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**Park Grant Application: Due May 1, 2025.** Last year's park public survey showed a need for a new playground. Other priorities can also be considered. ReeElla volunteered to help move the grant forward.

**Photo Radar Update:** Progress continues with the feasibility study for traffic monitoring.

**CEDS City Project Meeting:** Grass Valley's water main project is now priority #2 in the county possibly using infrastructure funding from the county directly.

**ODOT Rock Removal Issue:** Miscommunication led to city-owned rock being dispersed. Walter stated that he has never had the authority to give away city property. The mayor discussed with ODOT the crosswalk project across 97 and that discussion is now ongoing.

**Hemp Property Easement:** Further mapping is needed; a meeting with the property owner is the next step.

### New Business

#### **SIPP Forgivable Grant (\$20K):**

**Motion:** ReeElla moved to proceed with the Clean Water Master Plan update; Tom seconded.

**Result:** Motion passed unanimously.

**DEQ Forgivable Loan (\$100K) Update:** To be reviewed at the next meeting. Documents to be sent to council via email.

**Online Training for Council:** All members have received the training modules via email.

**Property Violation Letters:** Two properties need cleanup notices. Additional violations require formal complaints.

### Other concerns:

**Meeting Schedule Change Proposal:** Rick proposed moving meetings to Fridays instead of Mondays; discussion to be held next meeting.


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**Adjournment**

- **Motion:** Bonne moved to adjourn; ReeElla seconded.
- **Result:** Motion passed unanimously.
- **Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.**

**Dated:** April 7, 2025

**Attest:**



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Christian Ayles, Mayor



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Samantha Allen, City Administrator

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**Present:** Christian Ayles – Mayor; Meinrad Kuettel – Acting Administrator; Rita Wilson – Council President; Bonne Whitley – Councilmember; ReeElla von Borstel – Councilmember (via online); Tom Rolfe – Councilmember (via phone)

**Absent:** Samantha Allen – City Administrator; Rick Whitacker – Councilmember; Joann Duarte – Councilmember

**Guests Present:** Katharina Kuettel, Everett Carson, Leta Ann Reckmann

**Call to Order:**

Mayor Christian Ayles called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Consent Agenda:**

The Mayor requested a review of the agenda. Bonne Whitley moved to accept the agenda as presented. Rita Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Guest Speaker:**

No guest speakers were present.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The Mayor requested approval of the regular meeting minutes from January 6. ReeElla von Borstel moved to approve the minutes as presented. Rita Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Financials:**

Rita Wilson moved to accept the financials as presented. ReeElla von Borstel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Walter's Maintenance Report:**

1. **Park Tree Removal:** All designated trees have been cut and cleaned. Gary will provide a recommendation and estimate for additional tree removals. One tree at the southwest corner of Lincoln and 2nd, along with another tree in the park, requires urgent removal. The estimated cost for both trees is \$2,475. The council approved this expenditure.
2. **CXT Bathroom Door Repair:** Walter consulted with professionals about the CXT building lock system. A locksmith quoted \$1,200 for a new lockset. A new door, not including shipping, would cost \$2,600. ReeElla von Borstel inquired if this would provide a long-term solution. Walter stated that door abuse is the primary issue and noted a simple latch would not be feasible.

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3. **Water Rights & Beneficial Use Claim:** Paperwork has been initiated. John Short of Water Rights Services LLC will coordinate with Walter. Half of the required payment has already been made.
4. **CXT Cleaning Procedure:** Walter drafted a job description for council to look over. He also drafted a supply list which he plans to post in the CXT's back supply area for the CXT cleaner.
5. **Emergency Diesel Supply:** Walter suggested a 1,000-gallon fuel tank for emergencies. Currently, the generator has 280 gallons, but the duration of time that would help in an emergency is uncertain. The council tabled the discussion for now.

**Late Payments for Water Service:**

Meinrad Kuettel reported on behalf of Samantha Allen that five accounts are overdue, with two being significantly late. Red notices will be issued to these two accounts. The council discussed the timeline for issuing red notices, agreeing that 90 days is a reasonable threshold.

**Old Business:**

**City Income Survey:** The initial March deadline is no longer applicable due to changes in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for 2025. The new expected application deadline is in the fall. RCAC, a free service, will continue assisting with the process as we still have time to get this done.

**RV Installation for Fire Department:** The Mayor suggested requiring an application for any modular building in Grass Valley. In some cases, a conditional use permit from the city may be necessary.

**Manufactured Home Property Update:** The home still requires a survey and necessary permits. Rita Wilson suggested inviting the property owner to the next meeting to review documentation. The council noted that septic holes have been dug. The Mayor requested a survey and city planner recommendations. A draft letter will be prepared inviting the owner to the next meeting.

**New Business:**

**Bonne Whitley Reappointment:** Bonne Whitley was sworn in for another four-year term as a council member and signed the pledge.

**City Project List (CEDs):** The project list for the county's February 19 meeting was reviewed and approved.

**Mayor's Training:** The Mayor will receive training to prepare him for his new role.

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**Water Project Fund Account at the Bank of Eastern Oregon:** The council agreed to establish special funds set aside for future water system repairs.

**City Rock Removal:** Walter was not informed about the removal of the overage rock from the city's street paving project. The rock was moved to private property outside city limits. Rita Wilson recommended contacting ODOT for an explanation. The Mayor requested the council's decision on further action. Rita and ReeElla von Borstel suggested requesting ODOT to replace the removed rock. The council will await ODOT's response.

**Pavilion Update:** Acoustic panels have been installed. The next phase includes adding stage curtains, which will improve sound and heat retention. Funds are available for this project from the Pavilion Fund Bank Account. Also, Walter recommended relocating the router for better accessibility during events. The council approved proceeding with these updates.

**Budget Committee Vacancy:** Haley's position needs to be filled due to her relocation. ReeElla von Borstel suggested advertising the position at the post office. Rita Wilson proposed including a vacancy notice in water bills with an explanation of the role. The Mayor requested that budget committee rules be distributed to council members. The new budget cycle starts July 1.

**Other Concerns:**

**Photo Radar Update:** This item was not on the agenda. Meinrad stated that there is still no news from the company that originally reached out to us. The Mayor plans to revisit the issue with the Sheriff and the Justice of the Peace. ReeElla von Borstel spoke with the Sheriff about increasing coverage on the south end of town. The Mayor suggested that a council member take the lead on identifying issues and exploring potential solutions, including researching other companies that provide photo radar services in Grass Valley.

**Adjournment:**

Rita Wilson moved to adjourn the meeting. Bonne Whitley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 PM.

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**Dated:** March 3, 2025

**Attest:**



Christian Ayles, Mayor



Samantha Allen, City Administrator



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**Present:** Meinrad Kuettel – Mayor; Samantha Allen – City Administrator; Rita Wilson – Council President; ReeElla von Borstel – Councilmember via online; Rick Whitacker- Councilmember; Tom Rolfe–Councilmember; Joann Duarte – Councilmember via phone

**Absent:** Bonne Whitley – Councilmember

**Guest(s) Present:** Bert Norris, South Sherman Fire & Rescue; Christian Ayles

**Call to Order:**

Mayor Meinrad Kuettel called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Consent Agenda:**

Meinrad asked for a review of the agenda. Rita moved to accept the agenda as presented. Rick seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Guest Speaker:** Bert Norris

**Bert Norris, South Sherman Fire & Rescue** gave an update about the modular building they want placed alongside the Fire Hall. He spoke with Catherine DeKnight at the building codes division in Pendleton. Because the building they have is classified as an RV, there are no stipulations or inspections needed and setback rules don't apply. The codes division says they don't have anything to do with it. So, it seems to be up to the city council to approve the placement of the building (RV) utilizing city property. Accordingly, since it won't be a permanent structure, the only thing that will be needed is a power hook-up requiring a 50-amp RV circuit, enough for lights and radio chargers. Bert said the building/RV would be removed when a future new fire hall is built. In the time being they need storage space. Moving the Fire District's files to this new building would increase the City's filing area.

ReeElla is fine with it if the electrical can handle the additional load, and a certified electrician is hired to get this done at the fire district's expense. The fire district will get a professional to tell us what needs to be done. ReeElla moved that the fire department be given permission to put in the unit as an RV and we recognize that they will pay for any electrical updates and other things that have to be done for the unit. They are expected to keep us posted as the process goes along so that the council has an opportunity to address issues as they arise. Tom seconded the motion. All in favor with no one opposing.

Bert also brought up the upcoming water needed for the solar project. He has been going through some of their requirements during their construction phase. They are talking about a need for up to 1,070,000 gallons of water from the local municipality. Bert is gleaning this information from other projects that have done this in the past through the Oregon Department of Energy. Across the board, the solar projects are utilizing the local municipality where the project is located. This

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applies during the construction phase of the project, but that could take 6-8 months or more. He is meeting with them on Wednesday to go over a site protection plan regarding the Fire Department. Meinrad asked if Bert could keep us informed about this project. Walter let the council know that our system was not built to handle that kind of water volume. Council member Rick Whitacker pointed out that it will strain our water source since one of the 2 wells is already having issues. Our system was built to accommodate residential-only water usage with emergencies for a house fire only and limited to battling a fire for 2 hours before we need to source water elsewhere. And we all know the statistics that fires are getting bigger, not smaller.

Walter believes our well has been worse since the arrival of a new well outside of town that is causing some kind of interference, Tom pointed out that if they are pulling water for the time to do a project that is 119,000 gallons a day. Rita will bring this up at the county meeting.

The Fire District is doing a big purge of old equipment right now getting rid of 5 years of collected stuff that is unusable. None of it can't be donated because it is expired.

**Minutes Approval:**

Meinrad asked for approval of the regular meeting minutes from December 2024. Rick moved to approve the minutes as presented. Tom seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Financials:**

Meinrad questioned the resources on the budget sheet being less than the expense sheet. He was just making sure that we had the funds to cover this deficit. Once the SCA grant money and DEQ grant funds come in the resource line will look a lot healthier. Meinrad wanted to let the council know about the amendments that needed to be made to the request for funds for the SCA grant. There was confusion over what was completed vs. what was on our original plan. So, there was rewriting and resubmitting of documents to ODOT over this issue. Rita moved to accept the financials as presented, and Rick seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Walter's Maintenance Report:**

**1. Ice storm clean-up:**

Walter has been working around the clock on this. He was unsure if he was to clean up resident branches that had fallen partially on city property but mostly on their own property. He removed everything off the road, and the ditch in the back of the park.

2. If debris is on private property ReeElla sees nothing wrong with pushing branches back on resident property if we get it off the road and make it safe for travel. There is concern among the council members that this could start a dispute about whose property the tree is on. The council agreed that Walter should not have to go on private property.

3. The city's right of way is not marked clearly. A telephone pole can be used as a guideline, but the fact of the matter is that it is still unclear as to how far the property line

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is from the telephone pole. Walter is going to clean up on Oak Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets that were completely blocked

**4. CXT restroom door and restroom cleaning:**

Walter tried to get a grant last year for this. A couple of weeks ago the inside door handle on the north CXT fell off. He was not informed that this happened by the restroom custodian who took it with them. That night a trucker went in there at around 10 pm and got locked in. We don't know how long he was locked in there. It was 17 degrees out and he was in there in a T-shirt. He banged on the door and destroyed it, which is understandable. The guy was finally let out by a neighbor. That door is now locked with a sign on the door that it is closed. Walter got a hold of CXT and asked if they had a person who could come out and assess the situation. He will follow up this week. The south door is still usable but not working well. The doors are warped, and Walter has temporarily fixed them over the years. We will follow up at the next meeting.

- 5. Rita complained that there was no toilet paper on Sunday. Walter wanted to point out that no one had cleaned the bathroom for a week, so he did it himself. He thinks we pay the cleaning person for piece work. Not by the month. The Council and Walter need to come up with an idea of what is going to work going forward. Whether it is for the current employee, or we go with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party contracted business. Meinrad and Walter both pointed out that when it is cleaned it is done very well. Walter is checking the status of the restroom daily when he takes out the garbage. It appears maybe 2 days a week that cleaning is being done while paying for 5 days a week. The cleaning person is considered an employee the way we set her up when she was hired. It was suggested we should have at least a sign-up sheet. She has a timesheet that she keeps with her but is not posted. Because she wasn't working hourly this issue became confusing. Meinrad has talked to her in the past and thought everyone understood what was expected. If we are going to pay her by the month ReeElla suggested, we need to change her job description because there wasn't an original agreement given to her by the City administration. All the agreements with the employee were verbal, not in writing. The council feels she needs to be accountable to either Sam or Walter, and let them know when she can't come in; that there should be a notation of cleanliness posted along with the timesheet posted in the back janitor's room. There needs to be a signed contract that establishes what the expectations are. Sam can make a spreadsheet to post. Rita is going to talk to Debbie about the issue of exploring piece work job as an employee of the city.**

**6. Late Payments for Water Service:**

Sam said that 4 letters went out for people who were 3 months late. They have until the 20<sup>th</sup> of January to pay. Payments for overdue water service invoices have been received consistently.

**Old Business:**

**1. Income Survey for the City:**

We have not received any updates other than Michelle at MCEDD has been sending out

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emails. The deadline to complete and submit the surveys is March 2025. ReeElla wants this pushed up in priority she stated we may need to get someone else to do the survey. The fact is that we are getting this service for free, and we don't know if we can afford to pay the \$3000-\$4000 to get it done sooner. Michelle is very on top of our position and is following up.

**2. Road and Bridges Survey Update:**

Walter stated that the bridge survey has been done every two years by the city in the past. Walter is not going to change anything on our submission because he talked to Salem about this and was told none of our bridges meet the federal guidelines to qualify as a bridge on this survey. He will also keep the mileage of our roads the same.

**3. Sharp Agreement Update:**

Last we heard Kristen was going to move forward coordinating with the Sharps lawyer. ReeElla wanted to know why this hasn't been resolved yet, we say the same thing every month we need to move forward and get this taken care of and off our agenda and if Kristen can't do it someone should be able to. Sam to call Kristen soon to see what is up. Meinrad said that we did talk about other avenues we could pursue to resolve the issue but didn't want to do anything that drastic in a small community like ours.

**4. Manufactured Home Property Update:**

The owner has gotten approval for the septic on the property. The council disagreed that he had gotten that. No permit has been posted and no holes dug at this time. Sam will call him again. Sam was to call the code Department again as well.

**5. Photo Radar Update:**

Meinrad spoke with Dave Bergman in Wasco and their city has not heard anything yet. Rita asked who the company that we were doing the contract with. This company was offering us a free analysis before contracting and information on a study that we could use to show that we need the photo radar system in place. We could pursue this with another company to get a second opinion. There is also concern the extra work in processing the infractions may put too much of a burden on the Justice Court in Moro which would make the whole process unaffordable. It was mentioned we might want to consider a different company. Meinrad stated he would love to see council members taking the time to investigate this and follow up with a plan to go forward. We are just having to wait for the data that was collected to be processed. Continue to address this issue next month.

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**New Business:**

1. **Meinrad proposed that we change the order on the agenda.**

**First Rick and ReeElla were sworn in with correct verbiage documents. We are swearing in the new council member with Meinrad in the position of mayor and then once everyone is sworn in for the council, we go through with Meinrad declining the mayor position for the upcoming term and then propose a resolution to appoint a new mayor at that time. Rick signed his document. Bonne will be sworn in next meeting. ReeElla will sign the document at the next meeting.**

**Meinrad declined the write-in appointment:** Although no one ran for mayor, Meinrad received 10 write-in votes, and Rita and Tom each received 5 votes.

**Meinrad read the new resolution regarding the council appointment of a new mayor:**

**Signing the resolution by the council.**

**Roll call vote:**

**Rita      Yea**

**ReeElla   Yea**

**Rick      Yea**

**Tom      Yea**

**Joann    Yea**

2. **Chris Ayles read the oath of office for mayor:**  
effective January 6, 2025
3. **Drinking water protection plan certifications:** Walter brought in a handout for the council with all the things that we have not really done here in the city. We need to fill this out. We will get to that next meeting.
4. **Auditors report the final draft of the report copy given to the council.**

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5. **Another rating on Employees Walter and Sam for the last half of 2024. Joannduarte60@gmail.com is better than duarte60@embarq.com**

**Other Concerns:**

Rita ordered and has the acoustic panels for the pavilion. They will try to put them up this week. Each panel has a historical picture of Grass Valley.

**Motion to Adjourn:**

Rick made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Dated: February 3, 2025

Attest:



Meinrad Kuettel, Mayor



Samantha Allen, City Administrator