

North Powder Council Meeting
Minutes
August 4, 2026
City Hall (340 E Street)
6PM

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance: Mayor Alan Brown called meeting to order at 6:01 pm. Pledge of allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: Don McClure, Don Clark, Becky Sturm, Midge Clause, Josh Guthrie, and Alan Brown. Lindsay Thompson is absent.

Public Comment: Joyce Lawyer asked some questions for Linda Dixon, who is unavailable to be in person. She wanted to know if the owners of the motor home on 2nd St have been talked to. She was told that “we haven’t got there yet” from Ordinance Officer. He explained that we have been working that way. Stated that this motor home is on the State Highway and there has been contact with them. It was not positive. Joyce stated she is surprised we are working on private property ordinances before the City’s property is being violated. She was told that we will take the ones that we can get and to be patient with the process. Joyce then asked about City Hall being closed on Friday. Mayor Brown stated that City Hall will be closing permanently on Fridays to give the office a chance to catch up. He has checked with Imbler, Elgin, Cove and Union and they are all closed on Friday. Please feel free to contact those offices. Joyce stated that it’s a small town and people that work out of town only have Fridays to get into the office. Becky stated that they can call or email me if they need to make an appointment for a Friday. Joyce asked about being closed on Fridays and Alan stated that the office will be closed on Fridays from now on. Joyce asked about a \$10 late charge and when did that get voted in. Becky stated that it was probably a mistake when the new system was being updated and will get that changed.

Connie Lawyer stated that her grandson-in-law bought a washing machine 2 months ago and just changed his filter and it was full of mud and gunk. Don answered by stating we have had two low pressure alarms and we flushed the hydrants. She asked if it will be cleaned next month. Don stated that he cannot tell her that. She asked why she should have to pay for a \$2,000 filter in her house and she can’t even drink?

Diana Elledge stated that she has a problem that has been going on for 15 years. A lot of promises were made. Her lines have been cut off. Her water softener and filter system has been coming out smelling like sulfur, rotten eggs. It is a swamp green color. She has had destruction onto her property. Now there is a property line dispute, and I’m told you guys have no records on the property line.

Alan stated her best source to find a property line would be the County Assessor’s Office. Diana stated that the county has no records either. Was said they were lost in a fire. Mike Wisdom stated that he did not know of any fire. Diana went on to explain that when she bought the property there were four lots. The city was under the impression that I owned that field next to my house, I was told at that point by the mill that they had not annexed and had taken twenty feet of my property for right of way. They said that would come back to me, and didn’t. She was asked if she had gone to the title company? She stated that her neighbor had somebody do a survey of his property, which then included part of mine and the one on the other side. Alan stated that we can do some digging to see what we can find.

Bonnie Findley stated she wanted to take a moment to recognize the community accomplishments. This year’s Huckleberry Festival brought in 32 vendors, 38 cars for the car show and 13 parade entries. Hopefully helped increase traffic to help local establishments while attempting to raise funds for and awareness of the North Powder food bank. Those numbers aren’t just statistics. They represent people who choose to invest their time and their energy. I want to personally thank the council and the city for their support. Also, the committees and individuals who have quietly put in tireless hours to prepare for this event. The work that happens behind the scenes is enormous, and it does not go unnoticed. I am deeply grateful for every effort.

Terri Brown stated that fire is on everybody’s mind. We are a Firewise community and is inviting the community to the next meeting. It will be September 29 at 6:00 pm at the Grange.

Amend/Accept Agenda:

Alan stated that he would like to make an announcement, suggestion. Let's make sure if we have things that we want to get on the agenda, that we do that in advance so that we don't continue to amend the agenda because someone came forward 24 – 48 hours before the meeting. Becky stated that she would like to have the items the Wednesday before the meeting. That gives her time to have the packets to the councilors before the weekend for them to go over.

Motion to accept 7/7/2026 minutes: Don Clark, 2nd: Midge Clause, vote unanimously.

Amend/Accept Minutes:

Don McClure stated that there was some misunderstood information from DEQ. It was a very confusing letter, and the \$10,900 fund is not going to be used to do this project. Instead it will be used to pay the fine with DEQ.

We don't have a finding on the leak test. We're starting that leak test by the end of the week. In ten days, and we'll have that behind us and not have to worry about that.

Alan stated that Mike Wisdom spoke briefly and wanted to highlight, in the Municipal Court agreement, that if there's a fine or a forfeited bail, does half that money go to the city and the other half to the courts in our ordinance violation agreement? Mike stated yes. It is in writing.

Motion to accept agenda: Midge Clause, 2nd Dave Hoene, vote: 4 yes 1 abstained, Josh Guthrie.

Accounts Payable:

Josh Guthrie questioned the allocation fund numbers. Becky explained that each department has a number: 01 City Hall, 02 Library, 15 water, 25 sewer and 30 is street. He asked where the mayor's spending is. Becky stated that the mayor doesn't buy anything just for him. He buys for the city if he buys anything and it'll be allocated to that department. Josh asked if he had a company cell phone? Becky stated that he does not have a company cell phone. Josh stated that John had a city cell phone. Becky stated that he did not. She has never paid a cell phone bill that was John's. Josh asked if he had ever had a cell phone? Becky stated that as long as she has been here, he did not have a cell phone with the city. She has not looked back to see if he did at one time. Josh asked who all had city phones. Becky stated that Don McClure has one for Public Works, Matt Clark has one for Public Works and she has one at the office. Josh asked if that is why there are 4 bills at \$61 each for one month for the Verizon bill? I stated that these bills were split between departments. Josh questioned the reimbursement from Don McClure when he had to pick up chemicals in Ontario. Josh asked where the one was for when he had to go to John Day? It was explained to Josh that the reimbursements were from the prior months' expenses.

Motion made to accept the accounts payable: Don Clark, 2nd Midge Clause, vote unanimously.

Library Report:

Mike Schoeningh has submitted his letter of resignation dated July 9, 2026. He was very instrumental in getting the new library put together. We are very thankful to him.

Huckleberry Festival went very well. The float in the parade was great. I'd like to thank a few people: Don McClure for providing the trailer, Nina McClure for helping, Kathy Clark and anyone else that I forgot, for the work and effort that everyone put together, it was a great success. We made \$75 on the book sale, which I consider good. I still have a lot of books if anyone would like to come see them, please call and set up a time because I have books to give away.

Karlie Martin asked why we didn't have an open house for the library and all their investment in the first year, we thought like you'd be able to go check it out during Huckleberry Festival.

Midge stated that we did have an open house. It is a lot of work to get this together. Unless you've worked on the library board, unless you've been the librarian, you have no idea how much work is involved. We are still clearing out books from storage and still have a bunch to go through. We will be buying new books and audio books soon. We have three people who will be submitting a letter of intent to be on the library board tonight. This month we will be having an author night for local authors and publishing companies. I will be posting notices soon. Back by popular demand, we will be having another rock painting day, and they will be hidden around the community. We will have a puzzle exchange program as well. I have been putting together, with the director of library services in Baker City, a handbook for public library board members. There will be guidelines that we have to follow that have not been.

Nina McClure: I am expressing my strong interest in serving on the library board. I have been a resident for six years. I am a repeat visitor, compassionate supporter of our local library and recognize it as a vital hub for our community. Thank you.

Casey Townsend: I want to express my interest in serving on the North Powder Library Board. As both an educator and longtime member, I believe our library plays an essential role in fostering lifelong learning, supporting families, and bringing our community together. I would be honored to contribute my experience and dedication to its continued success. Throughout my career in education, I have seen the lasting impact of early literacy on a child's future. Developing a love of reading at an early age, regardless of ability, creates opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom. Libraries inspire curiosity, encourage lifelong learning and provide equitable access to information and resources for all ages. I taught kindergarten and special education in North Powder for 8 years and hold a bachelor's degree in elementary ed with a specialist reading endorsement and a master's degree in special education. I currently serve as an autism consultant with Inter Mountain BSD, partnering with educators, families, and school districts across Eastern Oregon to support inclusive practices and improve student outcomes. In addition to my educational experience. I bring strengths in collaboration, communication, public relations, and community engagement. In previous years, had served on the city finance committee. I also enjoy staying current with emerging technologies, including AI, and appreciate how libraries continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of their communities. If selected, I'd be a thoughtful, collaborative, and forward-thinking board member committed to promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and ensuring the library remains a welcoming resource for all residents. Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to serve the North Powder community in this capacity. Thank you very much.

Motion to appoint both to Library Board: Don McClure, 2nd Dave Hoene Vote: 4 yes, Midge abstained.

Public Works Report:

Don stated that the city has almost 8 million gallons of water used this month, and we have a couple of issues. Parameters were reset after the boil water level orders were out. The company that monitors our computer system down there checked the entire system and found these parameters to be off for this kind of usage and adjusted those, and that ended the water problems. Testing was all normal. We have never run out of water; it just wasn't getting pumped. The new Public Works employee has started. He is doing very well. We are going to have leak testing start either this week or the latest Monday. We need to do this, so we don't incur any fines. We've lost a fountain in one of the lagoons, the second one, just a little pump. It is at Arrow electric as of yesterday. I took it apart and transferred it to him. Have not heard from him but he gave a quote at \$1,318 to replace that. We ask council members this evening to approve that. The gate valve between the ponds was broken. I got that fixed and will install it tomorrow. I started the backfill on 5th and D St., I will be getting more dirt in tomorrow. The school was nice enough to donate a whole pile of dirt to us, and we'll get that filled in as soon as we can. We were going to advertise the vac truck; we were going to have B & K pick it up. They kept calling me and they were only going to give us about \$1,000. Then I got an offer of \$1,100 and accepted it. We are having issues with the meter reading system. Hopefully we can get something set up on the old laptop and download a new program. Would like to advertise the orange snowplow for sale.

Dave Hoene stated that we need to get together with Colby Thompson and talk to him about if we forecast another windstorm. Need to make sure that field is watered down to keep the dust from blowing into the city. There was discussion regarding how many loads of water was used by the fire crews. The total was 77 loads. More discussion on the amount of water used and how it affected the community. The fire crews were told to stop using the hydrants and find a different outlet. We were assured by the captain crew that they had stopped.

Alan stated that a motion to repair the fountain at the lagoon be paid for.

Karlie Martin asked if we are supposed to put it out to bid for anything over \$500?

There was discussion on emergencies and the fact that we cannot wait a month to get this leak testing done. If we fail the leak test it will cost the city thousands of dollars. Karlie Martin stated that if you start breaking the rules or not following the rules, what makes you follow rules on others? What makes something else more important than the other thing? If nobody knows the rules, how in the world can anybody sit up here and talk rules. You cannot make up rules. There is a city and a state regulation. You guys only have so much power. If you want some kind of emergency test in place, change the Charter.

Motion to put the repairs out for bid: Midge, 2nd: Don Clark, Vote: 4 yes, Don McClure abstained.

Motion for snowplow out for bid: Josh Guthrie, 2nd: Don Clark, Vote: 4 yes, Don McClure abstained.

Recorder Report:

Becky stated that the deadline for the upcoming election is, incumbents August 13 and new candidates August 19. These will need to be into the office by these dates no later than 12:30 pm.

I received a quote for the handheld system.

Back in October of last year the council approved getting new meter reading equipment. This is the quote that was sent to Emily. It was supposed to be on hold until March. I was not aware of this, and it was not done. The cost will be \$1,550 per year for the Harmony 3G training. The training is \$5,900 because they send someone to us to train for two days. This software will work with the meters. If we upgrade the meters, it will cost minimum of \$407 per meter, which would be approximately \$111,000.00. What they did was send us a loaner DMR receiver that we're going to get connected in the morning. If that works, we will be able to purchase that piece of equipment to be able to read meters for billing. The cost of the DMR is \$3,284. This system is extremely old. They have nobody in their Tec Service department that can troubleshoot these issues. This is the reason the billing has not gone out yet. The only alternative to this is physically reading them, which would take two – two and half days + the time it would take to enter each read into the billing system. If this DMR works and we can get our reads until we can get a grant or something that would pay for upgraded system, we purchase the equipment.

Alan stated he would say that we do not have the manpower to physically read meters. This has been a long time coming, and the same situation we were in with sewer, now water, it is now in our laps. In the future, we will hobble this along and see if we can figure out a way to make this work.

Joyce stated that they're only 12 years old and everything failing?

Don McClure stated that software that is out there is only built to last 40, 41 months is no longer supported. The software will be downloaded into the laptop computer and transferred to the billing system.

Rick Lawyer stated that when we bought the meters, they were pretty much obsolete then. We got a good deal on them because they were obsolete.

Becky stated that the company would be willing to rent the equipment to us at a monthly rate. But, not knowing how long it'll be before we get the grants to pay for the new system. Next, in your folders last month, I presented you with that code of ethics that I wanted you guys to read and think it over. This month, I want you to sign it and leave it here with me so that you have read it and understood it. That way, I can put it in your file.

Last month, we mentioned a Mass Communications system that would cost about \$3,000 per month. We found an alternative which would be at no cost to anyone. It is the Union County Alert system. Citizens would have to sign up for themselves, you can get your alerts by email, text and phone calls. We have all the information to get this started. It will notify you of any emergency situations. I have the contact information in the office. I will post the flyer; it will have a QR code that can be scanned to set up your account.

Alan asked the council if we are all okay with getting this signed and getting it turned in?

Josh Guthrie stated that he will not sign it. He feels like he took the pledge when he came in and he does sign one every year for the State of Oregon. Stated that there is a discrepancy with the code of conduct in the handbooks. One discrepancy is the rule of counselor: you must miss three consecutive meetings and the other says 25%.

Becky stated that the big open window in the office makes her feel unsafe. She would like to get that closed in with a window to exchange paperwork and payments. She states that she spends a lot of time in the office by herself, not allowed to carry a handgun or any kind of firearm to protect herself. She stated that she would like to have one or the other. She stated that there have been moments in there where she thought someone was coming over the countertop. She did a get a quote from one contractor, JBK Construction. Will get a couple more quotes.

Joyce Lawyer stated that we could put plexiglass about four feet. That would save the city money.

Midge stated that we must ensure her safety, and she doesn't feel safe, we need to make sure we change that.

Motion for bids to build wall in office: Dave Hoene, 2nd: Josh Guthrie Vote: Unanimous.

Mayor's Report:

Alan stated that there has been some concern on exactly what's going on with the water as far as volume amounts. In April, we used 1,741,500 gallons. In May that number jumped by 50% to 3,836,800 gallons. Generally, everybody starts watering their yard in May. In June the number increased to 6,6061,000 gallons. July was 7,972,800. I will have the numbers from last year in our next meeting. We have spoken to Trask Ritter, Don McClure and I about a forgivable \$50,000 loan/grant. Anderson Perry will do an evaluation of our system to find out where the faults are. They will look at PVC, asbestos pipe and cast iron. This will be the first step. The second step will be investigate the 524B House Bill. This has been presented by the governor of this State to infrastructure

improvement in towns under 20,000. That is potentially millions of dollars. Ten million dollars is what is being allocated. We will be diligent and this is going to be paramount moving forward. I ask everybody, please just trust that something is going to get done with this. Don will be available to go out and literally go to your home and test the water. Just give us a call and let us know that you want your water tested.

I don't know if anyone has noticed that since we had the ADA project in town, we have not had streetlights. I just want everyone to know that we are on that.

Josh stated that the \$20 bulk water fee for 10,000 seems low. Customers pay \$43.50 per 10,000 gallons. He stated that he thinks that we should call around the surrounding communities and see what they charge.

Alan stated that Josh should take that on calling the other communities and report back next month with what they charge.

Josh asked if we turned down the chlorine? He was wondering because he had noticed his toilet getting moldy now and it wasn't before.

New Business

Alan asked Mike Wisdom if he was able to get his handbook paperwork for the council. Mike stated that he did not. Alan stated that we will postpone that until next meeting.

Old Business:

The Compost Chick: Liz stated that they were going to exercise the franchise agreement for Union Sanitation. Deciding on a parallel franchise with the City of Union. Baker City said to go ahead and just sign a parallel franchise with the city.

Casey stated that so far, he has to reach out to the county. They had a meeting with them last week and they were looking into his franchise to make sure that he is allowed to do that. The solid waste district lady wasn't sure; she just had to do some looking into it. The City of Union, I talked to the mayor and we are good. The county is the only thing that hasn't been handled on starting the contract right now. We are going to continue to let her keep doing what she's doing until we get an answer.

Alan stated will this be another agreement that's like an addendum?

Casey stated that his franchise is more blanket. If guys are upset with something she's doing, you guys will contact her instead of coming after my franchise.

Liz stated he is trying to decide if it is better for him for me to go under his umbrella for the entire area that he serves or for me to go into each city and county like he is. He is going to do a little research.

Alan stated that they need to keep us updated on how you're going to do this.

Council Comments:

Meeting adjourned:

Adjourned at 8:03 pm