



ORLAND CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Matt Romano at 6:01 PM.

ROLL CALL

Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Brandon Smith, Terrie Barr, John McDermott, Vice Mayor JC Tolle and Mayor Matt Romano

Councilmembers Absent: None

Staff Present: Interim City Manager Janet Wackerman; City Attorney Scott Drexel, Negotiation Attorney Greg Einhorn (via Zoom), City Clerk Jennifer Schmitke

Arrived at 6:30: Police Sergeant Sean Johnson; Library Director Jody Meza, Assistant City Manager Rebecca Webster and Fire Chief Justin Chaney

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CITIZENS COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION - None

MEETING ADJOURNED TO CLOSED SESSION AT 6:02 PM.

CLOSED SESSION ENDED AND RECONVENED TO REGULAR SESSION AT 6:34 PM.

REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION - *Mayor Romano announced that Council met with City Staff and City Attorney Scott Drexel in Closed Session to discuss real property negotiations, Public Employment and conference with labor negotiators as noted on the Closed Session agenda. Mayor Romano shared that there was no reportable action.*

ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Warrant List (Payable Obligations)
- B. Approve City Council Minutes for May 20, 2025
- C. Receive and File Arts Commission Minutes from April 16, 2025
- D. Letter of Support for Glenn County Arts & Culture Council
- E. Approve and Adopt Second Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-24, Amending Orland Municipal Code Section 17.48.030(A) to Add Schools, Public and Private, as a Conditionally Permitted Use in the M-L Zoning District; and CEQA Exemption Under Guidelines Section 15305

ACTION: Councilmember Smith moved, seconded by Councilmember Barr, to approve the consent calendar as presented. Motion carried by a voice vote 5-0.

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Romano presented a proclamation to Amber Arnold, Program Manager II for Child Welfare and Adult Protective Services with the Glenn County Health and Human Services Agency. On behalf of the Orland City Council, Mayor Romano officially proclaimed June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Ms. Arnold, along with Amy Doyle, spoke about the critical role of Adult Protective Services and highlighted the efforts of the county team in supporting and protecting elderly residents throughout Glenn County.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Library Director Services Agreement with the City of Willows

City Attorney Scott Drexel provided the Council with an overview of the current Library Director Services Agreement between the City of Orland and the City of Willows. Under this agreement, Orland's Library Director dedicates 20 hours per week to the Willows Public Library, with Willows reimbursing 50% of the Director's total compensation (\$102,000). The agreement automatically renews each fiscal year but allows for modification or termination by either party with 30 days' written notice.

Mr. Drexel noted that staff has raised concerns about the City of Willows exercising an undue level of managerial control over the Library Director, which may be impacting her ability to effectively serve the City of Orland.

He presented the Council with three options moving forward:

1. Maintain the current agreement with the City of Willows;
2. Direct the City Manager to negotiate modifications to the agreement; or
3. Authorize the City Manager to issue a 30-day written notice of termination.

The City Council engaged the Library Director in a discussion regarding the shared services agreement with the City of Willows for Library Director services. Councilmembers expressed their opinions on the direction the City should take with the agreement.

Councilmember Smith noted that it is the Council's responsibility to support City employees and act in the best interest of Orland residents. The Council expressed consensus that the contract with the City of Willows should be terminated. Councilmember McDermott added that, while 30 days' notice complies with the agreement, it would be considerate for the Library Director to provide Willows with additional time to assist in their transition.

Library Director Jody Meza reported that she had completed several grant reports, submitted applications ahead of schedule, and worked closely with the full-time Library Technician, who she believes is well-prepared to take on most responsibilities. Ms. Meza confirmed that 30 days would be sufficient to conclude her duties in Willows.

Marti Brown, City Manager for the City of Willows, stated that Willows leadership was surprised by the decision and that this was the first indication of any issues concerning the shared agreement. She expressed concern about not being previously made aware of any challenges related to the Library Director's ability to perform her duties in Orland and said the City of Willows felt blindsided. Ms. Brown requested an extension beyond the 30-day notice—possibly 90 to 120 days—to secure new management for the Willows Public Library.

Councilmember Smith emphasized he believed the City of Willows was not blindsided by the situation. Councilmember McDermott reiterated that providing more than 30 days would be a gesture of goodwill, while Councilmember Barr stated that Ms. Meza knows the needs of both libraries and affirmed that 30 days was a reasonable timeframe to complete her work.

ACTION: Councilmember Smith moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Tolle, to authorize the City Manager to issue a 30-day notice to terminate the Library Director agreement. Motion carried by a voice vote 5-0.

Planning Consultant Selection

Interim City Manager Janet Wackerman provided a brief overview of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for Professional Planning Services. She noted that the RFP was issued on March 25, 2025, with the goal of securing a qualified firm to provide comprehensive municipal planning services. The selected firm would be responsible for overseeing a full range of planning tasks, ensuring consistent support for both current and long-term city needs.

By the April 28 deadline, the City received ten (10) proposals. A review panel, consisting of City staff and a Planning Commissioner, evaluated and ranked the submissions. Based on the evaluations, four (4) firms were shortlisted for interviews. Prior to interviews, references were thoroughly checked.

Ms. Wackerman conducted interviews with each of the four firms using a standardized set of questions. All firms demonstrated strong familiarity with the City's General Plan, zoning codes, and strategic location near Interstate 5 and State Route 32. Each had reviewed recordings of past Planning Commission meetings and was briefed on potential projects anticipated during their tenure.

Ms. Wackerman also summarized the key qualifications of each firm, including their availability, relevant experience, areas of expertise, and current client base.

Council discussed the interview process and available options regarding a special meeting with City Attorney Scott Drexel. Mr. Drexel explained that while the Council will provide input throughout the process, the final selection of a firm will be made by Ms. Wackerman, pending Council approval of the contract.

Orland resident Sharon Lazorko inquired about the size and resources of the firms under consideration. Principal Planner Mark Wolfe of NorthStar assisted Interim City Manager Janet Wackerman in responding to her questions.

Resident Alex Enriquez asked for clarification on the interview process. Mayor Romano explained that an evaluation matrix was used to assess and compare all firms during the selection process.

After discussing, Council opted to postpone selecting a firm. Councilmembers expressed interest in holding a special public meeting where all four finalists would be invited to give formal presentations prior to making a final decision.

Fiscal Year 2025-26 Draft Budget

Ms. Wackerman welcomed Council to bring forward any questions, concerns or comments.

Mayor Romano, speaking on behalf of the Council, expressed serious concerns about the City's budget deficit. He noted that last year, the City was approximately \$250,000 over budget in both the General Fund and Measure A. This year, projections show the City may exceed the budget by about \$400,000 in each of those areas. Mayor Romano emphasized that the City cannot continue operating over budget and highlighted the absence of funding for the Westside second ambulance, which was previously included under Measure A but no longer appears in the current budget. He concluded by stating that difficult decisions will need to be made moving forward.

Assistant City Manager Rebecca Webster stated that she could revise the next draft of the budget to include the Westside general operations costs under Measure A. However, she noted that doing so would further increase the deficit. In response, Mayor Romano emphasized the need to make cuts to both the General Fund and Measure A expenditures. Councilmember Smith clarified that the funding for Westside Ambulance operations was intended to be split evenly, with 50% coming from Measure A and 50% from Measure J.

Councilmember Tolle inquired about the "Special Technology" line item, which appeared across multiple departments and had nearly doubled since the previous fiscal year. Assistant City Manager Rebecca Webster explained that the increase is primarily due to the City's planned transition to cloud-based systems. She noted that this shift from physical servers to the cloud is a one-time cost and, while expensive, is necessary to avoid the equally high cost of replacing outdated servers.

Councilmember Tolle also suggested that, given the Council is asking departments to reduce expenses, they should consider evaluating their own stipends as part of the cost-saving effort.

Councilmember McDermott proposed revisiting and adjusting the budget after the first quarter to respond to more accurate financial data.

Councilmember Barr recommended holding roundtable meetings between City staff, department heads, and Councilmembers to openly discuss departmental needs and budget priorities. She expressed interest in conducting multiple sessions over the coming weeks to work toward a balanced budget.

Councilmember Smith acknowledged the challenges in balancing the budget and emphasized the need to increase revenue. He questioned how the City might attract more visitors and stated that bringing a hotel to town could help generate additional income. He concluded by stating that he is not comfortable with the City operating at a \$600,000 deficit.

Mayor Romano emphasized that the General Fund is intended to cover the City's core operational costs. He highlighted significant budget increases across several departments over

the past two years, noting that City Manager Administration expenses have increased by \$216,000, Police by \$737,000, Fire by \$235,000, and the Library by \$40,000. He also mentioned that costs for Public Works, City Council, and the City Attorney have all risen, with planning firm expenses expected to increase as well. Additionally, he pointed out that insurance costs have seen a substantial rise.

Councilmember Barr reminded the Council that projected revenues were overestimated compared to actuals, highlighting a clear decline in the local economy. She noted that gas sales are down, property taxes are stagnant, and overall revenue is not keeping pace with rising expenses. When revenues are overestimated, it leads to overspending by year-end. She stressed the importance of building a financial buffer, not just balancing the budget, but also setting aside reserves. Without proper savings, the City's current \$2 million in General Fund reserves could quickly diminish if revenues fall short. She urged the Council to take the situation seriously and proactively adjust spending, acknowledging that doing so will be difficult for everyone.

County resident Valerie Johnson provided the Council an update on Hidden Treasures and asked the City to prioritize the voucher program sharing it is very important that the \$25,000 is set aside for the spay and neuter program.

The Council directed staff to revise the draft budget for fiscal year 2025–2026 and bring the updated version back for further review and consideration.

City Manager Transition Update

Interim City Manager Janet Wackerman provided an update on the City Manager recruitment process. She reported that, to date, two applications (both Glenn County residents) have been received and reminded the Council that the application deadline is June 10. Ms. Wackerman also shared that she has reached out to various municipalities to see if they know of any potential candidates who may be interested in the position.

City Manager Verbal Report

- The League of California Cities Conference will be held in Long Beach in October 2025.
- Staff is currently working on a grant application for improvements to the sewer ponds.
- The Chamber of Commerce meeting is scheduled for June 5 at I-5 Café, where Monica Rossman will be the guest speaker.
- The "Wild Things" event will take place at the Library on June 11.

CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

COUNCILMEMBER UPDATES

Councilmember Smith:

- Attended the pool ribbon cutting.
- Attended the Orland Outlaws' new facilities open house.
- Shared that the Boysenberries are in season and ready to pick.

Councilmember Barr:

- Attended the ribbon cutting for the swimming pool.
- Thanked Valerie Johnson for her services in helping with felines in town.
- Attended the OUSD Music program in Vinsonhaler park.
- CK price graduation is June 4th and OHS graduation is June 5th.
- Shared Orland has incredible services for the youth.
- Shared a complaint about the ballfield grass being dried out.

Councilmember McDermott:

- Will be attending the EDC meeting on June 10th.
- Shared the Senior Expo is on June 18th from 10-2 PM at the fairgrounds.

Vice Mayor Tolle:

- Nothing to report.

Mayor Romano:

- Attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new pool.
- Participated in the grand opening of the Orland Outlaws' new facility.
- Expressed concerns regarding several ball fields drying out and the impact on community recreation.
- Shared that the only sustainable way to increase city revenues, improve employee compensation, and enhance community services is by expanding the tax base. The City requires a comprehensive long-term plan focused on revenue growth. Potential opportunities include developing parks and ballfields (such as a baseball facility), adding soccer fields, and acquiring additional fields using Measure J funds to attract more families.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Mayor Romano spoke about future agenda item topics including...

*The possibility of investing Measure J funds in a gymnasium or recreation center to support youth volleyball, basketball, and wrestling programs, further encouraging family engagement in the community.

*Does the City intend to hire GHD to provide strategic recommendations on investments to boost revenue, particularly leveraging proximity to I-5, finishing the Carnegie Center project and whether the City should plan to collaborate with Caltrans on improvements to Highway 32.

MEETING ADJOURNED 7:54 PM

Jennifer Schmitke, City Clerk

Mathew Romano, Mayor