

02-03-2026 Meeting: Ordinances, Public Works, and Community Planning

Meeting Information

Date: 2026-02-03 Brought to Order at 6:04pm

Location: Chalmers Town Hall 205 E Walnut St.

In Attendance: Rene'e Collier- Clerk Treasurer, Pam Brown - Council President, Amy LaOrange – Council Vice President, Lee Trippett – Council Member, Doug Reed – Public Works Superintendent, Jim Bolen – Town Marshal, David Kurth, and Pam Hiner Guest Speaker Breanna Rasmussen – White County Area Plan. Absent: Council Members Fred Schrader and Joshua Rinehart and Town Attorney Rebecca Trent.

Meeting Notes

Ordinances, Policies, and Legal Matters

- **Ordinance Amendment 87 (Industrial Waste Facility Zoning):** Presented by Breanna Rasmussen from the Area Planning Commission, this amendment removes I-3 zones as a location for industrial waste facilities, restricting them to I-2 zones with BZA special exception approval. The commission recommended it 10-0. **Conclusion:** A motion to pass Ordinance 2026-1 (Amendment 87) was carried 3-0. Motion to approve CVP Amy LaOrange. Second CM Lee Trippett.
- **Ordinance Amendment 88 (Industrial Parking Lot Standards):** Presented by Breanna Rasmussen from the Area Planning Commission, This amendment exempts I-1 and I-2 industrial property outside municipalities from hard surface requirements for their entire parking lots due to cost and maintenance issues with heavy trucks. Driveways and ADA areas must still be hard-surfaced. The commission recommended it 10-0. **Conclusion:** A motion to pass Ordinance 2026-2 (Amendment 88) was carried 3-0. Motion to approve CVP Amy LaOrange. Second CM Lee Trippett.
- **Volunteer Policy and Insurance:** Presented by CP Pam Brown. Volunteers for the town of Chalmers must sign a waiver to prevent lawsuits for injuries. They are covered by the town's insurance when operating listed town vehicles/equipment, but their personal auto insurance is primary if using their own vehicle.
- **Local Income Tax System Delay:** Presented by CP Pam Brown The implementation of the new local income tax (LIT) system (House Bill 1210/Senate Bill 238) has been delayed from 2028 to 2029.

- **Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:** Presented by CT Collier Minutes from December 9th and January 13th were approved with a 3-0 vote after a correction was made to the January 13th minutes regarding Community Improvement Development Committee members. The motion to approve was given by CVP Amy LaOrange and seconded by CM Lee Trippett.
- **Codification of Ordinances:** Presented by CT Rene'e Collier A link for the codification of ordinances was re sent to council. A missing ordinance book marked with sticky notes was thought to be with Town Attorney Rebecca Trent but Rebecca responded to the email stating it was returned. Everyone will continue to look for it.

Financials, Contracts, and Administrative Tasks

- **Approval of Claims:** CT Rene'e Collier presented Claims reports for December 31st, January 21st, and January 27th. Claims were approved with a 3-0 vote. Motion to approve was given by CVP Amy LaOrange and seconded by CM Trippett. The December report included year-end account reconciliations.
- **2025 Financial Submissions:** Presented by CT Rene'e Collier Several year-end financial tasks were completed on time, including the 100R, 1099s, W-2s, and WH-3 filings. The Annual Financial Report (AFR) is still pending council review.
- **Agreements and Contracts:**
 - **Rental Agreement:** Work is ongoing with Rebecca to update the rental agreement.
 - **Wessel Building Lease:** The rental agreement is signed, the tenant's insurance certificate is received, and a separate contract for roof work needs signing.
 - **Baker Tilly Contract:** The contract renewed and will be emailed to the council for approval at the next meeting.
- **Insurance Renewals:** The EMC policy was paid, and the workman's comp payment is pending clarification on public works position funding. An investigation is underway for a potential refund from Missions for dual insurance coverage.
- **Delinquent Accounts:** A list of delinquent accounts was reviewed. Most are old accounts not subject to shut-off, and it was noted that interest accrues faster than payments from tax returns can reduce the balances.
- **New Trash Rates:** The new rates have been entered into the system.
- **Record Retention Project:** A tedious project is underway to sort and organize an estimated 50+ boxes of records based on retention schedules. Four new locking file cabinets were purchased for \$89. A community sorting day was suggested to help with the volume. Documents will be boxed and labeled with destruction dates.

- **Pending Paperwork:**

- A required signed document for ordinance 88 was missing and will be provided for signature.
- W-9 letters still need to be sent out.
 - Paperwork for the January winter storm disaster is in progress to document costs. CT Rene'e Collier and PWS Doug Reed are compiling this information.

Personnel and Staffing

- **Salary and Pay: CP Pam Brown**

- A work session is needed to discuss the 2026 salary ordinance. An attempt will be made to schedule it before the next meeting at 5:15 or 5:30, pending a quorum. This will be a Public Meeting with no public comments allowed.
- A fifty-cent raise was requested for Frank and Bruce following their performance reviews. PWS Doug Reed will get the evaluation paperwork to CT Rene'e Collier so salaries can be updated in Payroll.
- An alleged call-out pay discrepancy issue that was brought up has been looked into by Deputy Clerk Linda Herget and CT Rene'e Collier and was found to have been paid correctly when the employees were called out.

- **Personnel Policy:** A separate work session is needed to review the personnel policy. CP Pam Brown will email the document to all council members and CT Rene'e Collier for review beforehand.

- **Public Works Positions Funding:** CP Pam Brown asked if CT Rene'e Collier had heard back from Epic Insurance. CT Rene'e Collier stated she is waiting for a response from John Parmley on whether the Worker's Compensation Insurance would be cheaper if we changed pay distributions to not include MVH.

- **TIF Board School Board Member:** CP Pam Brown informed the council that David Rosenbarger has been named the Brookston Town Board school board representative for the TIF board. His contact information needs to be given to Rebecca.

- **Organizational Chart:** An updated chart is needed to reflect changed job titles. CT Rene'e Collier will print this.

- **Laptop Request:** Doug Reed Public Works Superintendent requested a laptop for tasks like reading meters and searching for parts.

Public Works, Infrastructure, and Maintenance

- **Community Crossing Grant (Senate Bill 179):** Presented by CP Pam Brown. The town plans to reapply in July for this grant, for which an

additional \$75 million has been reserved for communities not funded in fall 2025. Suggestions for the use of funds were for updating the Legion (Community Building), paving and sidewalks (e.g., Walnut Street, Seventh Street). The town's available matching funds need to be investigated.

- **NIPSCO Gas Service Quote:** CM Fred Shader received a quote to run a gas line to the town garage (\$650 fee plus a \$67/month service fee on a six-year contract) was discussed. Concerns about high delivery charges led to the topic being tabled for further investigation.
- **Public Works Inventory & Equipment: PWS Doug Reed**
 - Only two water meters and no antennas are left in stock; new antennas cannot be afforded at this time. Durable poly lids for meters (\$75 each) were suggested for purchase in small batches.
 - New tools have been purchased for public works.
 - More water meters and antennas need to be ordered. Antennas are being damaged by non-town snowplows.
- **Building Maintenance: PWS Doug Reed**
 - A water leak from pipe condensation in the office is being addressed.
 - The Wessel building roof repair is scheduled, pending better weather.
 - A total of 316 ceiling tiles are needed for the Legion/Community building to replace stained ones, particularly where smoke eaters were removed. Bulk pricing will be investigated.
- **Legion Maintenance:** Electric and More is handling electrical repairs, including new signage, outlets, and a panel. Old smoke eaters were removed and the water heater was replaced, and the work is expected to be done by Friday.
- **Wastewater Plant:** Old skimmers were taken offline to prevent freezing. The plant is operating well.
- **Seasonal Maintenance:** Pothole patching will occur when temperatures rise. Tree trimmers are in town removing dead trees. There was discussion around the cutting down of a tree on private property and a resolution or ordinance stating that the trimming of trees on private property requires 30 days notice. PWS Doug Reed also said he doesn't think the trimmers put in a full 40 hours and he will be calling to get them back to complete the contracted amount of time of 40 hours. Salt and sand expenses for snow are currently under \$1,000.
- **Maps:** All physical maps are with Jim. Some are saved on a computer and could potentially be digitized.

IT and Security

- **Phishing Incident:** A recent phishing email incident, appearing to be from Clerk Treasurer Renee Collier, affected multiple Indiana towns. Staff were warned, and the Indiana Office of Technology and Bowsher IT found the phish and deleted it and all other data from the computer and reinstalled all information. The Phish appeared to be sent from the SSA and was thought to be sent during the uploading of year end files.
- **Cybersecurity Upgrades:**
 - CrowdStrike cybersecurity software will be installed on town computers at no charge via a grant.
 - Abnormal AI, an email security service, is being considered for \$280/year.
- **Cybersecurity Insurance:** The group plans to investigate cybersecurity insurance options with the Indiana Office of Technology.

Community and Public Relations

- **Town Newsletter:** The future of the newsletter was discussed. A proposal was made to publish it online quarterly, with printed copies available at the town hall for residents without social media access.
- **Park Updates:** A park meeting is scheduled for Feb 17th. Three new picnic tables and two benches are arriving.
- **Community Events:**
 - The Chalmers Community Event Committee is planning a “de-stash” event in March.
 - A high school event is being planned, and the town will arrange food trucks (Gordo’s, Beverly’s, Kona Ice, Traveling Tom’s) to support it. The pizza truck “Rolling in the Dough” is available for booking on April 23rd.
 - The annual tractor show will not happen this year.
- **Public Relations Issue:** An article in the “News and Review” based on a meeting recording was felt to have taken comments out of context. The group decided to be aware of the issue.
- **Scoreboard:** A new scoreboard has been ordered and is expected in the spring.
- **Grant Opportunities:**
 - An attachment for a grant due April 5th was not received by Ken.
 - Other opportunities were mentioned, including a White County grant for community-building and another grant with quarterly applications.

Regulatory and Compliance

- **Labor Law Posters:** New posters are required due to law changes, costing ~\$68 per set. The number of sets needed is being confirmed.
- **Budget Billing Plan:** The town must establish a budget billing plan by April 1st and implement it by July per state requirements.
- **Summer Moratorium:** A new moratorium will prevent utility shut-offs for a period ending in September, even for customers with rejected assistance applications.
- **Water Withdrawal Report:** An annual report for significant water withdrawal facilities must be submitted to the Division of Water.
- **Police vs. Case Reports:** A discussion clarified that “case reports” are for internal police use and not public, while “police reports” are public knowledge.

Next Arrangements

- Schedule a work session to discuss the 2026 salary ordinance, pending quorum confirmation.
- Email the personnel policy to all council members for review.
- Schedule a work session to review the personnel policy.
- Get David Rosenbarger’s contact information to Rebecca.
- Reapply for the Community Crossing Grant in July.
- Investigate the town’s available matching funds for the Community Crossing Grant.
- Investigate the details of the NIPSCO quote, including the \$67 monthly fee, before deciding on the gas service for the town garage.
- Follow up with Ken regarding the refund from Missions for dual insurance coverage.
- Follow up with John Parmley or Amber regarding MVH funding for the public works position.
- Process the fifty-cent raises for Frank and Bruce upon receiving the review paperwork.
- Work with Rebecca to finalize the updated rental agreement.
- Get the contract for the Wessel building roof work signed.
- Update the organizational chart with the correct job titles.
- Prepare a quarterly town newsletter for January, February, and March.
- Order more water meters and antennas.
- Patch potholes when the weather improves.
- [PWS Doug Reed] will provide copies of the receipt for tools to Renee.
- [PWS Doug Reed] will give the reviews from Bruce and Frank to Renee.
- [CP Pam Brown] will continue to look for the email regarding the grant opportunity.
- Investigate bulk pricing for the 316 ceiling tiles needed.
- Research the community grant that has quarterly applications.

- Get a cost estimate for removing all or part of the separating wall outside.
- Email the Baker Tilly contract to the council for review and approval at the next meeting.
- Look for the missing ordinance book.
- Continue sorting and organizing records using the newly acquired file cabinets.
- Confirm how many sets of labor law posters are required and order them.
- Send a purchase order for the Abnormal AI email security service.
- Follow up with John at the Indiana Office of Technology about cybersecurity insurance.
- Develop a budget billing plan by April 1st and implement it by July.
- Ensure the annual report for significant water withdrawal is submitted by Emmett.
- Send out W-9 letters.
- Book the "Rolling in the Dough" pizza truck for April 23rd.
- Plan for food trucks for the upcoming high school event once the date is confirmed.
- Investigate digitizing the physical maps.
- Order the requested laptop for Doug.

Meeting Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:32pm. The motion to adjourn was presented by CVP Amy LaOrange followed by a second from CM Lee Trippett.