

**CITY OF HARPER, KANSAS
COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL – 201 W. MAIN ST.
ERIC LATTA, MAYOR**

Council met in regular session with Mayor Latta in chair.

Eric Barker *present*
Jeff Capps *present*

Pat Kerschen *present*
Kenneth Leu *present*

Doug Murphy *present*
Brandee Vogele *present* 6:33 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the March 9, 2026 Special Council Meeting.

Minutes of the March 9, 2026 Council Meeting.

Minutes of the March 16, 2026 Special Council Meeting.

Appropriation Ordinance No. 20260323

February Municipal Court Publication Report

Business License Application – Harper Thrift Shop (Krista Kirkwood) a thrift and blessings shop at 905 Central, retail in a C-1 Central Business District.

Order of Violation – 615 W. 15th St. Chapter 28 Article 2 Section 28-19.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 6- 0.

Public Comment: none

Department Reports:

Police: Chief Burns reported responding to calls that included VIN inspections, welfare checks, child-in-need-of-care, possession of marijuana, child endangerment, suspicious activity, traffic control, dogs-at-large, a lock out and an unlicensed contractor.

Fire: Fire Chief Flores reported the department responding to a grass fire out in the county on March 20th and responding to a vehicle wreck on March 21st.

Public Works:

Staff reported reopening the burn pile on a temporary basis, with plans to close it again if illegal dumping resumes. City properties were treated with herbicide, noting Forman Miller is a certified applicator. Improvements at the cemetery included raising the gazebo and replacing runners. Utility updates included backfilling the Ash St. valve, replacing a leaking service line at 15th & Pine (including a lead gooseneck and corp stop), and addressing a grease issue from a private sewer main that required outside assistance. Water department staff will attend the Kansas Rural Water Association conference to obtain required continuing education hours for certification.

Council Action/Deliberations:

Mayor Latta to opened sealed bids for the contractual mowing of tall grass and weeds nuisance properties.

Bid 1: Skidsteer Services \$95 w/ primary structure; w/out primary structure \$85.00, no other bids were received.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Ken Leu to enter into a contract with Skidsteer Services for the 2026 mowing season for tall grass and weed abatements. Motion carried 6- 0.

Fire Chief Flores presented a first draft of proposed department policies and provided background on prior by-laws that were not formally approved by Council. Following department turnover in 2024, he was directed to develop formal policies. Some command staff expressed concerns regarding officer eligibility requirements, though Council indicated the standards were reasonable and open to alternatives if timely presented. Discussion included the potential for a “credit hours” system to support leadership responsibilities. The personnel committee offered to meet with command staff to review the policies and consider revisions. Council emphasized the goal of adopting policies prior to the April 27, 2026 appointments, with the option to delay appointments if necessary, and acknowledged the policies could be amended over time.

Councilman Capps proposed free admission to the Harper Swimming Pool for the 2026 season to increase community access and attract visitors, noting potential economic benefits. Concerns were raised about lost revenue (estimated at 1.5 mills), increased operational strain, and fairness to taxpayers. Alternative uses for council pay, particularly for fire department needs, were discussed. While some interest was expressed in limited free access, such as for local youth or designated free days, Council showed greater support for implementing a weekly free day rather than a fully free season.

Councilman Capps presented research on hosting night swims as a potential revenue source. Manager Ord identified bugs as a primary concern, noting that converting existing white halogen lights to yellow LED could help mitigate the issue. Preliminary costs were discussed, including \$65 per bulb for 16 lights, with additional conversion costs unknown. Staff was directed to work with Capps on a transient guest tax application to fund LED lighting upgrades and additional lifeguard staffing for free swim days.

Motion Brande Vogele second Jeff Capps to authorize Monday's as free swim days for the 2026 swim season. Motion carried 5 – 1, with Eric Barker voting no.

Council considered an amendment to the Sycamore Development Conveyance Agreement, providing for the reimbursement of KHRC fees to the City for lots that receive Kansas Housing Investor Tax Credits. Motion by Doug Murphy second by Ken Leu to approve the amended Conveyance Agreement for lots in the Sycamore Addition. Motion carried 6- 0.

Council discussed an amended fee schedule, including inspection fees for building code violations. Councilman Murphy proposed increasing the administrative fee for second and subsequent inspections to \$100. Council also confirmed that the \$50 administrative permit fee for demolition should be charged when city staff performs the work, regardless of IBTS involvement.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Ken Leu to adopt Resolution No. 947-26 a resolution establishing a schedule of fees to be charged for certain services, permits and licenses provided by the City of Harper, Kansas, repealing Resolution No. 946.26, as amended. Motion carried 6- 0.

Council considered revised program guidelines for the Residential PRIDE Program (Partnering to Rehabilitate with Investment, Development and Education), to make non-owner-occupied properties eligible to apply, and to provide an incentive for the rehabilitation of uninhabited/vacant properties in the form of loan forgiveness if the loan is repaid early.

Motion by Pat Kerschen second by Jeff Capps to adopt Resolution No. 948-26 a resolution amending the program guidelines set forth in Exhibit A of Resolution No. 810-20 for various beautification and improvement projects for residential properties within the city limits of the City of Harper, Kansas. Motion carried 6 – 0.

Committee Reports: Councilman Kerschen reported working on segregation of duties and oversight by finance committee. In the next couple of weeks, they would review the first quarter's reports and start working on the 2027 budget.

Admin. Report: Admin. Cooperrider reported that updated specifications for the new city shop are being finalized with IBTS and the project is expected to be rebid later in the week. An estimate of \$49,000 was received from Wilson & Co. for a drainage study at an alternative shop location. RFPs for demolition of dangerous structures at 604 Oak St. and 1912 Pine St. were issued with proposals due April 13, 2026, and proper notice was confirmed for 704 Oak St. Staff confirmed potential CDBG eligibility of up to \$650,000 for the HUB project if owned by a non-profit. Additional updates included addressing a street light outage at Sycamore, exploring options to convert the retention pond into a recirculating pond, and ongoing interest in 907 W. 17th St., with consistent communication provided to interested parties regarding Council-established conditions.

Admin. Cooperrider provided background on a 1961 waterway easement on the Williams property that staff became aware of in 2025. The site has been staked, and initial maintenance options were explored, including burning, which was not recommended. A proposal from Rinke Construction to clear trees (excluding large hardwoods) and mow Johnson grass for improved visibility and future maintenance planning was presented at a cost of \$4,000. Council approved sole sourcing the initial cleanout to Rinke Construction, with future maintenance to be bid at a later time.

Admin. Cooperrider shared the process for an applicant that will be pursuing a boarding house in an R-1 district. Currently it was not an allowed use in R-1 and would have to be re-zoned to R-3 or an amendment to the zoning regulations. Either way there would be public hearing and recommendations would come from the Planning Commission to the City Council.

Admin. Cooperrider reported on pending state legislation allowing cities and counties to designate their entire jurisdiction as a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP) area. Discussion focused on how to handle projects beginning prior to enactment, with staff planning to consult the League of Kansas Municipalities on the potential to pre-approve applications since valuation impacts would not occur until 2027.

Old Business: Councilman Leu reported on a 911 Communications Committee meeting attended with Chief Burns, Chief Flores, and Admin. Cooperrider. County Commissioner McCurley stated the County plans to discontinue the 400-radio system to avoid maintaining two systems but is open to alternatives, including transferring responsibility for the 400-tower's upkeep and maintenance to another entity.

Notices/Communications: Concerns from Commissioner McCurley were shared with City Council regarding state legislature impacting PILOT funds received by counties for wind farms. If the state starts taxing them, then the PILOT agreements could be null and void and the counties would take a significant hit to revenues. Council was encouraged to engage senators and representatives.

Councilman Murphy announced a side-by-side / pickup / motorcycle, poker run on April 11th as a fundraiser for the Harper County Buckin' T's.

Councilman Leu share his appreciation for Harper County Heart and Beth Coslett working to get the Farmer's Market to the Blue Fair Barn, they were doing a lot of work to get people to town and using the fair barn.

Motion by Brande Vogeles second by Eric Barker to adjourn. Motion carried 6- 0.

Tiffany M. Cooperrider CMC, CPM
City Administrator/Clerk