



## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE - BUDGET REVIEW

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 AT 5:00 PM

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COUNCIL ROOM, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 450 S. MAIN ST., RICHLAND CENTER, WI 53581

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM. A quorum was present. Administrator Oliphant affirmed proper notice. Members present were Ryan Cairns and Karin Tepley. Melony Walters was excused. Others Present: Administrator Ashley Oliphant, Financial Officer Misty Molzof, Alderpersons: Rachel Schultz and Ron Fruit, and Mayor Todd Coppernoll.

### PRELIMINARY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE 2026 BUDGET

The committee engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding the preliminary 2026 budget as presented by Administrator Oliphant. Topics included the role of government, current service offerings, and the priorities and objectives of the elected officials.

Given the constraints imposed by levy limits and expenditure restraint regulations, it was emphasized that the budget must serve as both a policy guide and a strategic planning tool. The focus should be on funding local services that are essential and mandated, while evaluating discretionary services to determine their necessity, cost, and alignment with local priorities.

Significant attention was devoted to distinguishing between required and non-required services. Required services include:

- General Government: Administration, elections, elected and appointed officials, assessor services, legal counsel, insurance, and auditing.
- Public Safety: Police, health and human services, and emergency services including fire protection.
- Public Works: Streets, buildings and grounds, cemeteries, and refuse collection.
- Conservation and Development: Building and zoning.
- Capital Outlay and Debt Service

Non-required services identified were:

- Culture and Recreation: Aquatic center, Symons Center, community/senior center, recreation programs, parks, and library.
- Conservation and Development: Economic development.
- Enterprise Funds: Airport, room tax and tourism, and taxi services.

With current levy limits, the City is permitted to increase the levy by approximately \$59,000. However, the County Ambulance Service has requested an additional \$52,000 in funding for 2026, which would consume nearly the entire allowable increase.

The preliminary general operations budget, which excludes capital outlay, reflects an increase of approximately \$560,000 over the 2025 budget, primarily driven by wages and benefits. Notably, about 50% of this increase is attributed to the Police Department due to contractual obligations under the existing union agreement.

Preliminary capital outlay requests amounted to approximately \$1.4 million. Given the operational budget deficit, these requests cannot be funded by 2026 revenue sources such as tax levy. However, capital outlay may be funded through borrowing or utilizing cash reserves.

Key expense areas discussed in detail included the Shared Ride Taxi services, the Police Department, and cultural and recreational services—particularly the Symons Center—and the potential need for wage and temporary hiring freezes.

Revenue sources considered included borrowing, adjustments to the current fee schedule and service charges. The committee also discussed the importance of the State revisiting funding mechanisms such as sales tax revenue and how levy limits are imposed.

Committee members provided the following direction to Administrator Oliphant:

- Conduct further analysis of the taxi service to determine if ongoing participation is viable.
- Further evaluate the City's ability to provide funding to support the Symons Center.
- Explore borrowing options.
- Include a 2.75% wage increase for non-union employees in the 2026 budget.
- Provide a list of proposed budget cuts and impact on deficit.

Additionally, members requested that the Mayor meet with the Police Chief to review the Police Department's budget and staffing levels.

No formal action was taken.

**SET NEXT MEETING DATE** - September 30th at 5:00PM

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn by Cairns, second by Tepley, carried 2-0. Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:20 PM.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Misty Molzof, Financial Officer/Deputy Clerk*