

QUARTERLY REPORT TO COUNCIL



Meeting Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2026
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Department: Public Works
CC: City Administrator John Walsh

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of current Public Works activities, capital improvement projects, operational accomplishments, staffing considerations, infrastructure priorities, and departmental support services for May 2026. The report incorporates updates from the Engineering Division, Public Works Operations Division, Water Quality Division, and Information Technology Division, while also summarizing current departmental challenges impacting service delivery, operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, and project implementation.

Despite staffing limitations, increasing operational demands, aging infrastructure, and rising material costs, departments continue to make measurable progress on priority infrastructure projects, regulatory compliance obligations, operational maintenance, and long-term planning initiatives.

Engineering Division Update

- Secured a \$1 million federal Community Project Funding Award for the Reservoir Project.
- Final stages of coordination and bidding efforts for the Wastewater Capacity Improvements Project. Project bid opening is scheduled the week of May 18th.
- Major progress continued on transportation, sewer, water, and roadway improvement projects.
- Ongoing TMDL implementation activities and regulatory compliance coordination.
- Completed Railroad Avenue Watermain Replacement project.
- South 16th Street Watermain Replacement completed by Public Works Operations crews.
- Transportation System Plan (TSP) update officially initiated.
- Street lighting policy draft review currently underway.

Key Engineering Challenges:

- Limited staffing capacity affecting TMDL planning, implementation, and reporting requirements.
- Approximately \$20 million funding gap remains for future reservoir and water storage improvements.
- Firlock area sewer infrastructure deficiencies and septic failures continue to require long-term planning and funding.

- Vacant Engineering Division position continues to impact workload distribution and project timelines.

Public Works Operations Update

- Team installed 200 feet of 24-inch storm line and new roadway culvert at Campbell Park.
- Team completed installation of 300 feet of 6-inch ductile iron water main with six new services and fire hydrant.
- PW assisted Columbia City with emergency sewer blockage response and flood cleanup support.
- Team completed water system improvements, hydrant installations, and citywide vegetation maintenance.
- Team cleaned 35 catch basins and continued storm infrastructure improvements.
- Team maintained parks, restrooms, lighting systems, kiosks, and recreational facilities throughout the city.
- Team completed 65 utility locates and read 5,308 water meters during the reporting period.
- Team responded to multiple after-hours emergency service callouts including water leaks, sewer backups, and storm-related system failures.

Water Quality Division Update

Wastewater Treatment Plant:

- Team repaired Headworks Screen #1 auger and gearbox and returned the unit to service on April 28.
- Team cleaned the North Contact Tank on April 2.
- Team completed computer backup activities in preparation for the upcoming SCADA system upgrade.

Water Filtration Facility:

- Team replaced uninterrupted power supply battery.
- Team calibrated pH probe and facility turbidimeters.
- Team inspected reservoir hatches and documented conditions for sanitary survey requirements.
- Team replaced failed smoke detectors throughout the facility.

Pump Stations:

- Completed surge protector replacement and generator troubleshooting at Pump Station #1.
- Replaced generator battery at Pump Station #7.
- Conducted wetwell cleaning and grease treatment maintenance activities.

Pretreatment Program:

- Conducted grease trap inspections at multiple commercial establishments.
- Completed quarterly pretreatment sampling activities.
- Received Arcadia Pretreatment Application and initiated permit drafting activities.

Upcoming Priorities:

- Finalize Arcadia Pretreatment Permit.
- Continue Wastewater Treatment Plant SCADA system upgrade implementation.

Information Technology Department Update

General Operations:

- Onboarding temporary staff positions for Police and Engineering Departments.
- Processing several public records requests and continued development of records processing workflows.
- Coordinated replacement NetMotion environment after Columbia County 911 discontinued support.
- Evaluated long-term phone system replacement options including RingCentral and Zoom.

Operational Statistics:

- Facilities requiring onsite support: 4
- Tickets opened during April: 25
- Tickets closed during April: 15
- Outstanding tickets: 10+

Major Technology Projects:

- Police Department NetMotion VPN replacement is operational.
- Police Department MFA implementation remains necessary for CJIS compliance.
- Planning continues for replacement of citywide computer systems.
- Court transitioned from Teams to WebEx for compatibility with County Jail systems.
- Council Chamber computer replacements and audiovisual upgrades are planned.

IT Challenges:

- Increasing public records requests continue to consume substantial staff time.
- Citywide computer replacement needs continue to grow.
- Long-term planning continues for phone system replacement and endpoint security modernization.

Current Department-Wide Challenges

- Budget reductions and rising material costs continue to impact operational capacity and project delivery.
- Anticipated retirements present succession planning and institutional knowledge challenges.
- Recruitment remains difficult for technical, engineering, maintenance & utility operations.
- Aging infrastructure and technology systems continue to require significant modernization investments.

Upcoming Priorities and Next Steps

- Continue procurement and contracting activities for the Wastewater Capacity Improvements Project.
- Advance Reservoir Project planning, funding coordination, and property acquisition efforts.
- Continue annual pavement striping and watermain replacement initiatives.
- Maintain compliance with TMDL and environmental regulatory requirements.
- Continue recruitment efforts for vacant and difficult-to-fill positions.
- Continue implementation planning for Water Quality SCADA system upgrades.
- Advance Police Department CJIS compliance initiatives related to MFA implementation.
- Continue citywide computer and equipment replacement planning.
- Continue evaluation and planning for citywide phone system modernization.

Conclusion

The Public Works Department continues to balance daily operational responsibilities with long-term infrastructure planning, regulatory compliance obligations, technology modernization, and community service delivery. Despite staffing limitations, budgetary pressures, aging infrastructure, and increasing operational demands, staff continue to make measurable progress on priority capital projects, operational improvements, water quality compliance, technology initiatives, and public service support activities.

Continued investment in staffing, infrastructure, technology systems, and long-term planning efforts will remain essential to maintaining service reliability, regulatory compliance, operational efficiency, and community growth.