



City Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 21, 2025 at 6:00 PM

33 Church Street, Sutter Creek, CA 95685

The Agenda can be found on the City's Website: www.cityofsuttercreek.org

The City of Sutter Creek City Council Meeting will be available in person and LIVE on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/@CityofSutterCreek>.

You can also watch the meeting on Zoom (please note Zoom participation is only available for viewing.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81391466458?pwd=4jXmBm1AP5bEbiID3iDwuxk4GpreRY.1>

Or Dial by phone: 301 715 8592 Webinar ID: 816 8589 0182 Passcode: 186036

Unless stated otherwise on the agenda, every item on the agenda is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") per CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c), 15061(b)(3), 15273, 15378, 15301, 15323 and/or Public Resources Code Section 21065.

1. Call to Order and Establish a Quorum for Regular Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Gunselman.

Present: Mayor Claire Gunselman, Vice Mayor Julia Sierk, Council member Jim Swift, Council member Susan Feist, Treasurer Victoria Runquist

Absent: Council member Dan Riordan.

Staff Present: City Manager Tom DuBois, City Attorney Derek Cole, City Clerk Aaron Wolcott, Project Manager Will Watson, Finance Supervisor Mason Peters.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

The pledge of allegiance was led by Mayor Gunselman.

3. Public Forum

Resident Helen Bierce: Spoke in favor of installing an emergency siren in Sutter Creek, citing recent deadly natural disasters in other locations like Paradise, CA, and Texas. She argued that a siren provides a crucial initial

alert, especially when cell service is down or people are asleep. She noted that she has brought this to Council several times over the years.

Sutter Creek Fire Chief, Dominic Moreno: Stated that the County's cell phone alert system is more effective than a siren as it provides specific details about the emergency. He emphasized his position that defensible space and property cleaning are the most critical fire prevention measures. He explained that installing and maintaining a siren system would be logistically complex and expensive, likely requiring multiple units and a dedicated power and activation system.

4. City Manager's Report

City Manager Tom DuBois provided updates on current activities in the City. A suspicious fire occurred in the basement of City Hall on July 16, 2025. Damage was minimal and the fire is under investigation by the Police Department. The new online sewer billing portal has been rolled out, allowing residents to pay and receive notifications online. The city is continuing the transition to a new financial system. The recent community pool party was a success. Progress is being made on code enforcement, with a full update to come. DuBois met with Senator Maria Alvarado-Gil's office staff to discuss funding for the wastewater treatment plant.

Upcoming agenda items will include updates on code enforcement, a trenching ordinance, and short-term rental update.

5. Presentations

A. Amador County Assessor

Amador County Assessor, Jim Rooney presented the previous year's County assessment data. Mr. Rooney reported that the county's overall property assessment roll increased by 4.1%, with Sutter Creek seeing a 3.35% increase. He noted a consistent decline in the number of primary residences in Sutter Creek since 2021, suggesting a trend towards second homes and rentals. He contrasted Amador County's slow growth with the massive development planned in nearby Sacramento County, highlighting the challenges of housing affordability.

During Public Comment, Fire Chief Dominic Moreno, stated that the City has people coming up on the weekends and staying in their homes and then going back to the Bay Area. He stated that this has a negative impact on the community.

B. AWA Update on Rate Study and Tanner Water Treatment Plant Capacity

Larry McKenney, General Manager at the Amador Water Agency (AWA), presented an update on the agency. McKenney updated the council on the Tanner Water Treatment Plant and an upcoming rate study. The Tanner plant is operating near its reliable capacity of 4.5 million gallons per day. AWA is undertaking over \$32 million in projects to expand the plant to its licensed 6 million gallon capacity, which is projected to meet demand through 2040. To fund this and other projects, AWA is securing approximately \$70 million in debt. A new rate study is underway, with proposed increases expected to be in the 4-5% range annually, intended to cover debt service costs. Public workshops will be held, with a final rate hearing scheduled for December.

Council member Sierk asked how the public could get involved in the rate study and McKenney stated that there would be public meetings about the study with notices to the public on how to attend and participate in the process.

Council member Swift asked how the new casino in Plymouth was impacting demand from AWA. McKenney stated that the casino is currently working directly with Plymouth on water for the casino.

Mayor Gunselman asked if AWA had hired grant writers to help secure other funding for the ongoing repairs and development. McKenney stated that they did not hire grant writers but did have a contract with a company for grant writing.

C. Updates on Bike route to Amador City and on Amador Trail Stewardship

Brad Booker from Amador Trail Stewardship presented an update on the proposed bike route connecting Sutter Creek and Amador City. The plan has been revised to use signage on existing posts, minimizing cost. The primary component within Sutter Creek would be the assessment and potential installation of a crosswalk at Hanford Street and Amador Road. The Amador Trail Stewardship has offered to provide project management and is seeking the support of City Council to proceed with the project.

The Council was in agreement with the project proceeding.

6. Approval of Minutes

A. City Council Minutes of June 30, 2025

Recommendation: By motion approve minutes as presented.

Motion to approve the Minutes from June 30, 2025 by Council member Sierk, second by Council member Feist.

AYES: Council members Sierk, Gunselman, Swift, Feist

ABSENT: Council member Riordan

NOES: none

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

7. Consent Agenda

A. Appointing New Members of the Design Review Committee

Motion to approve Item A on the Consent Agenda by Council member Sierk, second by Council member Feist.

AYES: Council members Sierk, Gunselman, Swift, Feist

ABSENT: Council member Riordan

NOES: none

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

B. Central San Joaquin Valley Risk Management Authority JPA Agreement Update

Item B was pulled from the Consent Agenda for further discussion. Mayor Gunselman requested that Council be given additional information on how the Central San Joaquin Valley Risk Management Authority (CSJVRMA) works. She did not want to hold off on the JPA agreement but did want more information.

Motion to approve Item B on the Consent Agenda by Council member Swift, second by Council member Sierk.

AYES: Council members Sierk, Gunselman, Swift, Feist

ABSENT: Council member Riordan

NOES: none

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

8. Ordinances and Public Hearing

9. Administrative Agenda

A. Weed Abatement Operation Plans

Project Manager Will Watson presented a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for enforcing the City's weed abatement ordinance. The process begins after the Fire District conducts three inspections and refers non-compliant properties to the City. The City will then issue notices, and if compliance is not achieved, will hire a contractor for abatement and recover costs through a lien on the property.

Council discussion focused on the timeline and the need to incentivize compliance. The Council directed staff to add a monetary citation or a clear warning of a future fine to the initial notice sent by the City to encourage property owners to act before abatement becomes necessary.

Fire Chief Moreno noted that work needed to be done with the County to mitigate risks on the edge of the City.

Resident Shirla Lopez noted that one of the issues homeowners in the county face is the cost of getting weeds under control. It is unregulated and people are charging large sums to get weeds cleared on their properties.

B. Fire Safety

Project Manager Will Watson presented information regarding potential fire safety programs the city could adopt, such as Firewise USA (a resident-led program) and Fire Risk Reduction Community (a city-led program involving policy changes).

Fire Chief Moreno expressed that the most effective strategy is focusing on property cleaning and hardening homes within the city, rather than relying on external fire breaks or grant-dependent programs.

The Council agreed that fire prevention is a top priority. Council member Swift said staff should focus on implementing the new abatement ordinance and exploring grant opportunities to support those efforts.

C. Renting City Facilities

Project Manager Will Watson and City Manager Tom DuBois presented information on Facilitron, an online platform for managing and marketing public facility rentals. The service would streamline the booking process for spaces like the grammar school. The cost is a 10% commission with a \$5,000 minimum fee in the first year.

The Council discussed the potential benefits of increased marketing and ease of use, as well as the challenge of the city's liability insurance requirement for renters. The consensus was to move forward with exploring the service.

10. Mayor and Council Member Reports

Council member Feist: Nothing to report.

Council member Sierk: Nothing to report.

Council member Swift: Nothing to report.

Mayor Gunselman: Reported on a successful Chamber of Commerce mixer hosted by the Sutter Creek Community Foundation at the historic Grammar School, which helped market the venue. She also announced that the foundation's historical video project is launching soon, with the first QR code video at the Monteverde Store.

11. City Attorney's Report

Nothing to report.

12. Future Agenda Items

13. Information and Correspondence

A discussion was held regarding the new format for the city's financial reports. Council members found the reports difficult to interpret and requested that future reports include more detail, such as expense categories, and asked for a future tutorial on how to read them.

- A. June 2025 Treasurer Report
- B. June 2025 Finance Department Report
- C. June 2025 Revenues and Expenditures vs Budget
- D. June 2025 Cash Report
- E. June 2025 City Clerk Report
- F. June 2025 Marketing Report
- G. June 2025 Planning Department Report
- H. June 2025 Public Works Report
- I. June 2025 City Engineering Report

14. Closed Session

Adjourned to closed session at 8:40 pm

- A. Conference with Labor Negotiator
 - Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6
 - Agency Negotiator: Tom DuBois, City Manager
 - Employee Organizations: Sutter Creek POA

15. Report from Closed Session

16. Adjournment

Adjourned at 9:04 PM

The next regularly scheduled meeting is August 18, 2025.