

Anacortes City Council Minutes - February 23, 2026

Call to Order

Mayor Ryan Walters called to order the February 23, 2026, Anacortes City Council meeting at 6:01 p.m. Councilmembers Marcia Hunt, Luke Currier, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Carolyn Moulton, Bruce McDougall and TJ Fantini were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Oath of Office

Councilmember Marcia Hunt

Finance Director and City Clerk Steve Hoglund administered the oath of office to Councilmember Marcia Hunt.

Announcements and Committee Reports

Mayor Walters made announcements on the following topics, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting: [utility billing issues](#), the [Downtown Streetscapes survey](#), openings on city boards and commissions, the Anacortes Police Department Citizen Police Academy, and the city's new [Projects page](#) that provides consistent information to the public.

Proclamation: Recognizing March as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Hoglund introduced Anita Isler, who spoke about her experience as a survivor of colon cancer and her organization, Colon Cancer Stars (www.colonstars.org). Ms. Isler advocated for early detection of colorectal cancer, citing statistics that show the disease is becoming more prevalent in younger age groups. Mayor Walters then read the proclamation recognizing March 6, 2026, as Dress in Blue Day and the month of March as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Parks and Recreation Committee

Mr. Fantini reported from the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting held February 19th. The topics discussed included the meals program for the Senior Activity Center for which the county will cease providing funding on July 1st. He then detailed an ongoing request for proposal effort led by the Northwest Regional Council to replace county funding for the program along with a pledge of support from the Senior Center Foundation, and donations received during the March for Meals program. The committee also discussed funding for the Senior Activity Center, which includes \$65,000 net annually from Skagit County. Additionally, the committee discussed the Ship Harbor boardwalk restoration project being undertaken in cooperation with the Port of Anacortes and the Samish Indian Nation, which is at 15% design. The city is actively pursuing grants to fund the project through the state Recreation and Conservation Office and the state Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. He added that updates on this project and all other city projects can be found on the [Projects page](#) of the city website. The committee also discussed staffing that was reduced by one maintenance position and an increasing reliance on public donations for park repairs and maintenance. Other items discussed included the abandonment of a potential boat launch on Cranberry Lake, the West 6th Street park that will require private funding for realization, the impending contract award for the Ben Root Skate Park restroom and parking lot enhancement project, and the Depot Plaza expansion that is expected to be complete in May 2026. Finally, Mr. Fantini announced that there would be a Parks and Recreation Open house held at the Senior Activity Center on March 10th.

Public Comment

Mayor Walters invited the public to comment on any item not on the agenda.

Wim Houppermans of south of Storvik Park in Anacortes, and a board member of Evergreen Islands, expressed a desire for the organization's inclusion in the Ship Harbor boardwalk restoration project.

Consent Agenda

Mr. McDougall moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda items. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

a. Minutes of February 17, 2026

b. Approval of claims in the amount of \$433,774.51

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:

EFT numbers: 114924 through 114947, total \$226,294.86

Check numbers: 114948 through 114962, total \$210,276.04

Wire transfer numbers: 384610 through 384896, total \$21,158.29

Other Business

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan Review

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Bob Vaux introduced the draft Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan Review, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting. He acknowledged Forest Advisory Board members Joann York-Gilmore, Kit Gerwels, and Brian Wetcher, who were present at the meeting, and thanked them for their work in updating the draft plan.

Discussion topics included:

- Trail access on the southern shoreline of Little Cranberry lake.
- Maximizing accessibility to the forest lands for all community members.
- The public comment process is never perfect.
- The timing of periodic reviews.
- Potability of water in Heart Lake, Whistle Lake and Little Cranberry Lake.
- Thanking volunteers and staff for work on the plan.

Mayor Walters invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item.

Public comment was given as follows:

Mark Nihart of Ward 2 in Anacortes spoke about a perceived lack of consideration of public comments in updating the Anacortes Community Forest Plan, proposing that the process be placed on hold until a more transparent process can be implemented.

Richard Mellon of Skyline in Anacortes, a member of Friends of the Forest and volunteer crew leader with the Washington Trails Association, spoke about the necessary resources for maintaining trails in the community forest lands, encouraging the council to consider providing appropriate ongoing financial support.

Wim Houppermans of Ward 2 in Anacortes and board member of Evergreen Islands asked for an additional public comment period for the draft plan.

Brian Wetcher of Forest Park Lane in Anacortes mentioned that there have been numerous occasions for public comment on the plan, referring the council to the established record and mentioning that the draft plan is well organized, clear and flexible and is empowered by the Comprehensive Plan. He asked the council to read the plan in order to better understand public comments.

Growth Management Hearings Board Appeals Update

City Attorney Darcy Swetnam provided a Growth Management Hearings Board appeals update, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion topics included:

- Appreciation of the City Attorney's efforts to defend the city's interests.
- Right of appeal versus the costing of public funds to defend the city.
- Recovery mechanism for attorney's fees as the prevailing party.
- The amount of outside counsel fees is roughly equivalent to the 1% property tax increase for this year.

Executive Session

Potential Real Estate Transaction per RCW 42.30.110(1)(b)(30 minutes)

Mayor Walters announced that City Council and the City Attorney would convene in Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110(1)(b) for approximately 30 minutes to discuss a potential real estate transaction. The mayor advised that the regular meeting would then adjourn with no final action having been taken. Councilmembers TJ Fantini, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Carolyn Moulton, Bruce McDougall, Luke Currier, and Marcia Hunt attended the executive session. At approximately 8:50pm the City Council returned from executive session with no action having been taken.

Adjournment

There being no further business, at approximately 8:50 pm, the Anacortes City Council meeting of February 23, 2026, was adjourned.