

Anacortes City Council Minutes - March 16, 2026

Call to Order

Mayor Ryan Walters called to order the March 16, 2026, Anacortes City Council meeting at 6:01 p.m. Councilmembers Marcia Hunt, Luke Currier, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath (arrived at 6:15pm), Carolyn Moulton, Bruce McDougall and TJ Fantini were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements and Committee Reports

Mayor Walters made announcements regarding [Senior Activity Center events and programs](#), the [Parks and Recreation spring events and programs](#), the [Community Development Block Grant Annual Plan](#) public comment period, the [project information page](#), and the upcoming State of the City Address on April 6th and an All-Department first quarter update on April 13th, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Economic Development Committee

Mr. Young reported from the Economic Development Committee meeting held March 10th. The topics discussed included how to capitalize on the ideas to generate revenue for the city, specifically on how to best attract those 2 million people annually who come through the city on the way to the Washington State Ferry terminal to stay in Anacortes to attend downtown events and / or patronize businesses. The committee discussed specific means to reach those people, such as geolocation, advertisements in local print publications, city departments via the website, or the Chamber of Commerce. He added that the committee would be coming out with a plan of action for community stakeholders to review that could perhaps have an impact on the coming summer season.

Finance Committee

Ms. Moulton reported from the Finance Committee meeting held March 12th. The topics discussed included the enterprise resource planning application that is being implemented, which is on track for July 1, 2026, for the financial modules and January 1, 2027, for the utility billing module. The committee also discussed the first quarter budget and Capital Facilities Plan amendments that would come before the council later on in the meeting.

Housing Affordability and Community Services and Planning Committee

Ms. Moulton reported from the Housing Affordability and Community Services and Planning Committee meeting held March 10th. The topics discussed included an update on services from Community Action, the Anacortes Housing Authority, and the Able Housing Initiative. Regarding the Able Housing Initiative, she reported that they had received \$4.5 million in grants to develop housing in Anacortes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mentioning that a house has been renovated and is currently housing some of the 46 adults and 75 children identified in the community with these disabilities. Ms. Moulton also mentioned that other area cities such as Port Townsend have been virtually attending committee meetings to understand and learn from the successful Anacortes community initiatives. Finally, the committee discussed Community Development Block Grant funding allocations for 2026.

Public Works Committee

Mr. Fantini reported from the Public Works Committee meeting held earlier in the evening. The topics discussed included the Public Safety HVAC improvement contract, fixing the pipe arch on Whistle Lake Road to prevent possible cross-connection contamination, the application for a \$1.5 million no-match Washington State Safe Routes to School grant for improvements including a 10-foot multi-modal path along 22nd Street from J Avenue to M Avenue and from 22nd Street to the high school, ADA ramps and lighting, and an

application for a no-match Bicycle-Pedestrian state grant that would fund a design contract for a 10-foot multimodal path from A Avenue to Anacopper Mine Road on the south side of Oakes Avenue. Mayor Walters added that the segment west of Anacopper Road had performed differently in terms of safety than the eastern portion, which informed the choice of road segment for the multimodal route. The committee also discussed the Wastewater Treatment Plant alternatives analysis that will come before the council in April.

Mayor Walters then read an announcement regarding safe storage or disposal of firearms, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Appointments

Resolution 3209: Planning Commission Appointment

Mayor Walters introduced the proposed Resolution 3209 that would confirm his appointment of Jill Underwood to the Planning Commission, subject to City Council confirmation, for a 3-year term through February 1, 2029.

TJ Fantini moved, seconded by Anthony Young, to approve Resolution 3209 confirming the appointment of Jill Underwood to the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Resolution 3210: Historic Preservation Board Appointment

Mayor Walters introduced Resolution 3210 that would appoint Zack Mosner to the Historic Preservation Board through December 31, 2028.

Marcia Hunt moved, seconded by Christine Cleland-McGrath, to approve Resolution 3210 appointing Zack Mosner to the Historic Preservation Board through December 31, 2028. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Public Comment

Mayor Walters invited the public to comment on any item not on the agenda. No one present wished to address the Council on any topic not already on the agenda.

Consent Agenda

Bruce McDougall moved, seconded by Marcia Hunt, to approve Consent Agenda items 6.a., 6.b., and 6.c..

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, TJ Fantini, Luke Currier, Marcia Hunt. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

6.a. Minutes of March 9, 2026

b. Approval of claims in the amount of \$851,137.98

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:

EFT numbers: 115086 through 115132, total \$708,843.55

Check numbers: 115133 through 115151, total \$116,091.60

Wire transfer numbers: 385024 through 385984, total \$26,202.83

c. Ordinance 4092: AMC Title 19 Permit Review Time Periods

Public Hearings

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Bob Vaux introduced the public hearing for the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting. Mayor Walters added that the public comment period would remain open through Monday, March 23, 2026.

Discussion topics included:

- Public comment is being received and noted by the council.

At 6:33 pm, Mayor Walters opened the public hearing.

Public comment was delivered as follows:

Josie Henderson of Anacortes and Executive Director of the Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands addressed the organization's contributions to the process, funding, enforcing applicable rules, and encouraged the council to make evidence-based decisions.

Marlene Finley of Anacortes and Evergreen Islands praised the plan's format, content, citizen science and baseline monitoring sections, and that climate change is meaningfully addressed. She expressed concerns regarding the lack of evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the 2021 plan, analysis of environmental or recreational trends, that policy statements that are not consistently supported by data, the need for greater emphasis on law enforcement and fire protection, including wildfire detection and notification systems, and the absence of budget discussion. She also advocated for natural resource management with the aid of an ecologist or natural resource manager, and to limit any new structures in the ACFL. Finally, she expressed the feeling that public ideas and comments were dismissed or not acknowledged.

John Meehan of 41st Street in Anacortes, representing the motorcycling community and a member of the trails committee, stressed the whole community's use of the forest lands, pointing out that most motorcycle users ride responsibly in the forest lands, and urged the council to give the Parks Director the enforcement capacity to better control access to the trails for all users.

Paul Barron of 13266 Heart Lake Road discussed the use of trail 248 and the effects of the parking area on the comfort and security of the nearby residents, which he pointed out, was not mentioned in the draft plan. He asked that city staff or forest managers engage with them and other adjacent property owners to mitigate any negative effects on residents. He added that he notices damage from motorcycles using trails where they are not authorized.

Linda Yearwood of 13223 Heart Lake Road, spoke about trail 248 and 247, that run along their property. She mentioned the parking area near their property and associated concerns regarding the small size of the area that leads to vehicles parking in their driveway, noise including late evening and early morning disturbances from activities at the trailhead, and the impact of expanding the parking area on wildlife. She also pointed out that law enforcement does not patrol the area, as it is outside the city limits and that the city has not communicated with them about proposed changes to the area.

Elke Macartney of the Island View neighborhood spoke about the need for improved signage to indicate appropriate areas for motorcycles on trails 302 and 300, and posting seasonal guidance regarding motorcycles at Whistle Lake and Heart Lake parking lots.

Josh Gates of West 4th Street in Anacortes expressed support for the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan as drafted, thanking the Parks department and Forest Advisory Board for their work. He added that he is president of the mountain bike advocacy group, Fidalgo Trailriders, who regularly volunteer and contribute to trail maintenance efforts. He mentioned that he coaches the Anacortes Middle School mountain bike team, where he educates team members about trail etiquette, responsible trail use, and trail maintenance. He concluded that the plan works well for all user groups as a whole.

Brian Wetcher of Forest Park Lane in Anacortes expressed thanks for the efforts that city staff, Forest Board members, and community members have put into producing the plan, underscoring the community nature of the project. He mentioned that the plan is flexible and enables public input to easily be incorporated if so desired,

and would be a tool for managing the ACFL for many years to come. He advocated for continued funding to enable the forest lands to serve as the jewel of the city and a place for residents and visitors to enjoy.

At 6:55 pm, Mayor Walters closed the public hearing.

Mayor Walters noted that the city will move to annex several parcels of forest lands that were added to the urban growth area last year, which would allow the city to enforce the city's laws, and that there is a plan to provide a law enforcement presence during the summer. He added that the city would be focusing on emergency preparedness initiatives to include wildfire response.

2026 First Quarter Budget and Capital Facilities Plan Amendments

Finance Director Steve Hoglund introduced proposed ordinances 5023 and 5024 that would amend the 2026 Operating Budget and 2026-2031 Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), respectively, referring to electronic drafts of the ordinances. He added that no public comments were received over the past two weeks.

At 7:01 pm, Mayor Walters opened the public hearing.

Public comment was delivered as follows:

Tarn Ohana of West 4th Street in Anacortes spoke in favor of the high value and impactful pedestrian safety projects being included in the budget and CFP amendments.

At 7:03 pm, Mayor Walters closed the public hearing.

Discussion topics included:

- Removing \$200k from the 2026 budget for line item 105.720.595.61.63 funding sidewalks and bikeways improvements and removing \$200k from the 2026-2031 Capital Facilities Plan for the annual sidewalks and bikeways program so that the pedestrian safety projects may go ahead.
- Possibility of grants requiring matching funds. Need to conserve real estate excise tax (REET) to have resources available in the future for other projects.
- Leveraging current funds for future projects.
- Limit the amount of finite REET spending in a constrained fiscal environment.
- Need to monitor budgets throughout the year to ensure that fund and project values are being maximized.
- Difficult choices to be made.

Marcia Hunt moved, seconded by TJ Fantini, to adopt ordinance 5023 with an amendment to reduce REET transfers in from account 105.720.397.00.00 by \$200,000 from \$238,292 to \$38,292, and to add a line item to add a deduct of \$200,000 from account 105.720.595.61.63.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, TJ Fantini, Luke Currier, Marcia Hunt. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Marcia Hunt moved, seconded by Anthony Young, to approve ordinance 5024 with an amendment to add a fifth line item to delete \$200,000 in 2026 of REET from the annual sidewalks and bikeways program.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, TJ Fantini, Luke Currier, Marcia Hunt. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Other Business

Contract Award: Public Safety Building HVAC Improvements – Design #25-187-FAC-001

Operations Manager WiL Ludemann and Facilities Manager Brandon Krause introduced proposed contract

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#25-187-FAC-001 with Hargis Engineers, Inc. to perform the Public Safety Building HVAC Improvements – Design project, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion topics included:

- Due diligence has been done to find the best means of tackling the project.
- Previous bids were canceled due to the complicated engineering and regulatory problems associated with replacing the system.
- Construction costs will likely be at least twice the initial estimate.
- No functioning climate control system for the public safety building.
- The roof is original from 2000.

Carolyn Moulton moved, seconded by Anthony Young, to authorize the mayor to sign contract #25-187-FAC-001 with Hargis Engineers Inc.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, TJ Fantini, Luke Currier, Marcia Hunt. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Downtown Streetscapes Project Presentation

Planning, Community, and Economic Development Director John Coleman introduced Jason Graf, Principal of First Forty Feet, who provided an overview of the Downtown Streetscapes initiative, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion topics included:

- Accessibility for individuals with disabilities is crucial.
- Concerns about maintenance of added paint and installation features.
 - Downtown Anacortes Alliance and Anacortes Creative District would lead the effort to install and possibly maintain in coordination with city staff.
 - 2-year lifecycle for paint or installation features.
- Seasonal nature of public gathering spaces.
- Data or case studies about parklets.
 - Process for permitting, managing parklets.
 - Other communities limit the number per block or manage them more closely.
 - Work best when used in conjunction with food and beverage establishments.
- Cross-street lighting feasibility.
- Signage consistency across the city.
 - The 2019 Comp Plan community favored leaving style up to individual businesses.
- Curb extensions are dangerous for cyclists.
 - Possibly use raised intersections found in East Sound on Orcas Island.
 - Mid-intersection traffic circles and taking away bike lanes
- Cost-effectiveness of using paint to shape traffic patterns.
- Parking options
 - Side street angled parking is more cost-effective.
- Art as a beautification device.

Mayor Walters invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. Public comment was given as follows:

Pat Gardner of Anacortes spoke in favor of using paint as a way-finding tool to guide people to important downtown locations and lighting. She mentioned parklets as being only desirable during the warm months.

Jordan Hay of Anacortes and Executive Director of the Anacortes Downtown Alliance spoke about how the plan is tangible and incremental and is a tool to help the community improve the downtown. She spoke in favor of working with the city as a partner and offered to help with fundraising and volunteers.

Meredith McIlmoyle of Anacortes and Executive Director of the Anacortes Arts Festival expressed excitement about the initiative and pledged to act as a partner to have Creative District stakeholders work with the Downtown Anacortes Alliance and the city.

Ursula Edelman of Anacortes spoke from the perspective of community youths, who do not always have funds to patronize a coffee shop or other businesses, expressing support for the creation of downtown gathering places.

Allen Rhoades of Stittwood and owner of the Rockfish Grill and Anacortes Brewery suggested that the truck route be moved from 4th Street to 3rd Street to make the plan work for downtown.

Tom Freeland of Anacortes and owner of the Keystone Building, mentioned that parking is very important and expressed concerns about a gathering space on 7th Street having a negative impact on area businesses.

Kathy Khile of Anacortes and owner of Scott Milo Gallery, expressed concern about gathering space limiting important space, access, and visibility in the area of her business.

Josh Gates of Anacortes and organizer of Open Streets suggested temporarily implementing some Downtown Streetscape ideas during the Open Streets event.

Laurie Gere of Anacortes and owner of Gere-a-Deli expressed concerns regarding the effect on parking of a gathering place at 5th Street, and was in favor of trying it during the summer or moving it to the east side of Commercial Avenue.

Elisabeth Freeland of Anacortes and owner of the Keystone Building expressed concerns about emergency vehicles being able to access buildings if a gathering space closed down 5th Street or 7th Street.

Mr. Graf mentioned that the plan moving forward is to reorient the list of priorities over the next couple of weeks and work with stakeholders to understand who are ready to take on roles and responsibilities. Then they would come back to council with a reviewed draft and obtain a cost estimate for feature improvements. Mayor Walters asked that the council provide their comments to Mr. Graf.

Adjournment

There being no further business, at approximately 8:50 pm, the Anacortes City Council meeting of March 16, 2026, was adjourned.