



# City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes

680 Park Avenue  
Idaho Falls, ID 83402

Monday, March 9, 2026

3:00 PM

City Council Chambers

## Call to Order and Roll Call

There were present:

Mayor Lisa Burtenshaw

Councilor Michelle Ziel-Dingman

Councilor Brandon Lee (*Arrived at 3:15 PM*)

Council President Jim Francis

Councilor Jim Freeman

Councilor John Radford (*left at 5:54 PM*)

Absent:

Councilor Kirk Larsen (*Work Travel*)

Also present:

Stephen Boorman, Interim GM – IF Power

Josh Roos, Chief Financial Officer IF Power

Jeremy Galbreath, Deputy Chief of Police

Linda Lundquist, IF Power

Brandon Norman, IF Police Sgt

Jacob Beck, Assistant City Attorney

Darin Jones, Human Resources Director

Mark Hagedorn, Finance Manager/Treasurer

Leigh Taylor, NRECA (*via Teams*)

Alan Cunningham, IF Power

Zack Jones, City Attorney

Emily Geisler, City Clerk

Mayor Burtenshaw called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. with the following items:

## City Council, Mayor

### 1. Discussion: Citywide updates, concerns, questions, reports:

- Council President Francis:
  - Expressed frustration with several bills currently before the Idaho Legislature, particularly those that could impact the City’s nondiscrimination ordinance, police operations, and City employees.
  - Mentioned concerns about House Bill 743 and proposed changes to House Bill 389, noting they do not reflect the reforms cities had sought.
  - Suggested that concerns about legislation requiring local police to act as federal immigration enforcement (HB 659) would carry more weight if a letter came directly from the police department rather than the Council.
  - Supported advocacy for legislation allowing cities to participate in a different insurance pool, which could significantly reduce costs for municipalities in the future.
- The Mayor expressed appreciation for the Council’s Friday meeting on priorities and budget review. Staff will compile notes from that discussion and bring them back to ensure accurate interpretation and to help guide next steps.

### 2. Acceptance or Receipt of Minutes

**Motion:** Receive the recommendations from the March 3, 2026, meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission pursuant to the Local Land Use Planning Act

- Moved by: Councilor Francis
- Second: Councilor Dingman
- Vote: Aye: Francis, Dingman, Freeman, Radford. Nay: none.



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- Motion carries.

## Power

### 1. Presentation & Review: General Manager Survey (Stephen Boorman, Leigh Taylor, Darin Jones)

- The City used the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to help evaluate what qualities are needed in the next General Manager (GM) of Idaho Falls Power.
- Surveys were completed by City Council, the Mayor, Idaho Falls Power leadership, staff, and other department directors (about 23 participants) to identify priorities and organizational needs.

Key Leadership Competencies for the Next GM. The most important qualities identified include:

- Visionary and strategic thinking to guide the utility through industry changes.
- Ability to lead change and manage risk as the energy sector evolves.
- External leadership and industry engagement, including awareness of legislation and collaboration with other utilities.
- Strong decision-making and analytical skills to achieve results.
- People leadership, including communication, employee development, and collaboration with other City departments.
- Integrity, courage, and commitment to public power values.
- Strong safety culture, considered critical for a power utility.

Strengths of Idaho Falls Power. Survey respondents highlighted several existing strengths:

- Competitive electric rates
- Reliable service
- Strong financial position
- Skilled workforce

Key Challenges and Areas of Focus. Common challenges and priorities for the new GM include:

- Recruiting, retaining, and developing employees
- Navigating the political and regulatory environment
- Managing power supply relationships
- Improving communication and collaboration between departments and with City leadership
- Maintaining a strong culture while addressing risks of burnout, silos, or perceived elitism
- Enhancing public and customer communication
- Planning for future growth and facility needs

First-Year Expectations for the New GM

- Build relationships with City leadership, staff, and stakeholders
- Align Idaho Falls Power's strategy with City priorities
- Maintain the utility's financial strength and reliability
- Address organizational capacity, succession planning, and potential leadership roles (e.g., assistant GM)

Hiring Timeline

- Job posting open until March 22
- Initial screening shortly after closing
- Remote interviews to narrow candidates
- Finalists (about 3–5) invited for in-person interviews
- Goal: select a candidate by May, with a start date around late May or early June

### 2. Review: Board Policy No. 5 – Financial Stability & Credit Worthiness (Josh Roos)

- Staff presented Idaho Falls Power Board Policy #5, which is reviewed annually by City Council.

- The policy was originally adopted in February 2016 and revised last year to include language related to the power plant.

Purpose of the Policy. The policy supports:

- Financial stability and creditworthiness by maintaining strong reserves, stable rates, and sufficient liquidity.
- Risk management guidelines for power purchasing and sales to ensure responsible transactions.
- Operational stability and transparency, especially as leadership or board members change.
- Maintaining strong credit ratings, which are important for power purchase agreements and bond financing.

Policy Components. The policy includes:

- Defined roles and responsibilities for management and the governing board.
- Reporting requirements (annual, quarterly, and monthly).
- Asset and operations management, including financial handling and cost-of-service considerations.
- Risk management rules related to power market transactions.

2025 Policy Updates. Three key updates were made:

1. Removed PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) language from the policy.
2. Added language on General Fund cost allocation and how transfers from Idaho Falls Power to the City's General Fund work.
3. Added reference to the Idaho Falls Power / Parks & Recreation agreement approved recently.

Council Discussion (Details are limited in the policy since certain topics are governed by separate policies.)

- Council clarified that Policy #1 had previously been eliminated, leaving Policy #5 as part of the remaining policy set.
- Questions were raised about large power loads (over 1 megawatt), such as speculative projects like cryptocurrency mining. Staff explained these are handled through individual contracts brought to Council for approval, often with special rate structures.
- Council also discussed ensuring policy appendices and related documents are properly organized.

Next Steps

- The policy update will be added to the upcoming Thursday Council agenda for approval.

### 3. Review: Annual Service Policy (Alan Cunningham)

- Idaho Falls Power updates its Service Policy every year to ensure infrastructure is installed correctly and meets utility standards. The policy is revised using feedback from linemen, contractors, and staff.

Key Policy Changes

- New signature page: Requires the engineer of record to sign the policy to confirm engineering compliance.
- Conduit size changes:
  - Residential service conduit increased from 2.5-inch to 3-inch, aligning with other local utilities and simplifying contractor compliance.
  - Single-phase primary conduits reduced to 2-inch, eliminating the need for the uncommon 2.5-inch size and reducing costs.
- HDPE ducting: Still allowed but discouraged in open trenches because it can "snake" and create friction when pulling cables. PVC may be used instead in some cases.
- Street lighting infrastructure:
  - For developments with 4+ lights, power will route through a Myers cabinet.
  - Idaho Falls Power will provide the cabinet (developers pay for it and install it).

- Metering improvements: Clearer rules for meter labeling and clearance, especially for commercial installations.
- Transformer pads: Precast pads are preferred (especially for winter installations), though poured-in-place pads are still allowed.
- Safety updates: Developers must use color-coded secondary wires leaving transformers to prevent wiring mistakes.
- Construction quality measures:
  - A two-year warranty is now required for installed infrastructure (previously only required for winter installations).
  - Utility vaults (“basements”) must now sit 9–12 inches above finished grade instead of about 6 inches.

#### Communication with Contractors

- Changes will be shared through:
  - Pre-construction meetings
  - The annual contractor meeting
  - Updates to the contractor map and documentation

#### Additional Update

- A new agreement with Rocky Mountain Power allows Idaho Falls Power to buy out existing infrastructure much faster.
- Transfer time for power service is expected to drop from 5–12 months to about 3–5 months, reducing delays for developments.

#### 4. Report: Q1 Financials (Josh Roos)

##### Overall Financial Health

- Idaho Falls Power reported a strong financial position with a healthy balance sheet and operating income.
- Cash increased to about \$69 million, up from \$60 million last year, largely due to a \$12 million drawdown from a power supply bond.
- Total assets decreased by about \$11 million (from \$98M to \$87M) because funds from that bond are being drawn down and used.

##### Liabilities and Net Position

- Accounts payable appeared unusually high (\$1.4M) compared to \$10K last year because a large peaking plant payment had not yet been processed at the end of the quarter.
- Net position categories include:
  - Capital assets (plants, equipment, etc.)
  - Restricted funds (e.g., conservation/energy efficiency funds)
  - Unrestricted funds, which represent the remaining balance.

##### Debt Payments

- The City made its annual interest payment on revenue bonds in March.
- Bond payments are structured with interest in March and principal + interest in September, allowing the City to keep funds invested longer to earn interest.

##### Income Statement

- Revenue: Down about \$147,000, but considered minimal compared to total revenue of \$17 million.
- Expenses: Down \$1.5 million from last year.
- Operating income increased to about \$5 million, up from \$3.7 million last year.

##### Fiber Network Update



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- Fiber cash and investments are steadily increasing as more customers sign up.
- The network had 9,900 customers by December and passed 10,000 customers in January.
- Customer sign-ups typically slow in winter but increase in summer.
- Interns will again help with marketing and sign-ups.

## Fiber Financing:

- About \$20 million was borrowed internally for the fiber project.
- Total project cost is estimated around \$30–40 million due to shared trenching and infrastructure with the power utility.
- The repayment plan is 10 years, with payments starting small and increasing as customer revenue grows.

## Power Supply and Demand

- The first quarter was unusually warm, leading to lower electricity demand.
- Power load was about 5,000 MWh lower than last year and 8,000 MWh below projections.
- Hydropower generation was also down about 3,000 MWh due to lower river flows.

## Power Market Activity

- Expenses show as increasing slightly because the utility purchased power for \$417K, but they were able to resell it for \$520K ultimately creating a profit. If that purchase was removed, our expenses would be down.
- The utility has not yet sold renewable energy credits (RECs) this year but expects to add \$500K+ in revenue once market prices improve.

## Customer Growth

- The utility has about 1,300–1,400 more customers than last year.
- Retail revenue remains nearly flat due to lower energy usage caused by warm weather.

## Water and Hydropower Outlook

- Snowpack and water conditions are near average in the Northwest, though winter temperatures have been 5–6°F above normal.
- Hydropower production depends heavily on spring rainfall and summer water flows.
- Officials said two consecutive poor water years would raise concern, but current conditions are acceptable.

## Power Plant Maintenance

- A City power plant is undergoing work and will be offline for about nine months, expected to return late fall.
- Lost generation during downtime may exceed the mechanical repair cost.

## Public Works, Power, Finance Update: Disconnect Policy (Josh Roos, Mark Hagedorn, Stephen Boorman)

City staff presented an updated utility disconnect policy that combines policies for all City utilities—power, water, wastewater, sanitation, and fiber—into one consistent process. The original disconnect policy was created by Idaho Falls Power in 2018 after the City installed AMI meters, which made remote disconnections easier and required a clearer, fairer system.

### Key Goals

- Create one unified policy for all utilities instead of separate rules.
- Ensure the process is predictable, consistent, and transparent for staff and customers.
- Standardize procedures using input from a monthly utility coordination group.

### Major Changes

1. Disconnect Timeline Adjustment
  - Residential disconnection timing changed from 45 days to 48 days after billing.



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- This prevents shutoffs from falling on Fridays, which could leave customers without service over the weekend.
- The change also spreads disconnect days evenly through the week.
- 2. Payment Extensions
  - Customers can now request two payment extensions per 12-month period (previously three plus a medical extension).
  - Each extension gives 15 extra days to pay.
  - Extensions cannot be used back-to-back.
- 3. Pledge Assistance
  - The City accepts payment pledges from three organizations:
    - EICAP
    - Idaho Health and Welfare
    - Community Council of Idaho
  - A pledge places a 60-day hold on disconnection while payment is processed.
  - Donations from other groups are accepted but do not stop disconnection until payment is received.
- 4. Returned or Rejected Payments
  - Customers get two chances per year for bounced checks or rejected ACH payments.
  - After that, they must pay using cash, credit card, or cashier's check.
- 5. Payment Arrangements
  - The City generally does not allow payment plans to ensure fairness.
  - Exceptions may be granted for special circumstances with approval from two department directors, allowing up to 30 extra days.
  - Anything longer must be approved by City Council.
- 6. Water Service Exception
  - If multiple customers share one water line (e.g., duplexes or multi-tenant buildings), the City may shut off the entire line if one account remains unpaid.
  - This action requires approval from the Public Works Director and the Mayor and is rarely used.

## Additional Notes

- The City encourages autopay/ACH payments, which now make up the majority of payments.
- Long-term plans include exploring prepaid utility systems, allowing customers to prepay and automatically restore service when funds are added.
- The policy also includes free service disconnection during business hours if customers need utilities shut off temporarily for maintenance or repairs.

## City Attorney, Police Discussion: Draft Ordinance for Alcohol Server Training (Attorney Jones, Deputy Chief Galbreath, Sgt Norman)

### Purpose:

The ordinance establishes a structured alcohol server training requirement to ensure compliance with alcohol laws, reduce over-serving, protect public safety, and provide clear expectations for businesses and employees. It balances enforcement with support to help businesses succeed while maintaining accountability.

### Overview / Intent:

- The program would be mandatory; it targets all establishments/employees serving alcohol or providing security.
- Goals include preventing over-service, reducing alcohol-related incidents, and promoting consistent knowledge of legal requirements.

- Training is designed to be minimal in time and cost: 2–4 hours online every three years, mirroring industry standards.
- Business owners play a key role in monitoring and ensuring employees complete the training.

#### Eligibility and Requirements:

- Employees serving alcohol must complete training and may be required to be listed during the annual licensing application process.
- Establishments are responsible for tracking employee compliance.
- Failure to comply may result in initial misdemeanor violations, escalating only with repeated noncompliance.
- Discussion of how to track training compliance: via employee lists submitted by employers during annual licensing, affidavit, etc.

#### Enforcement / Penalties:

- Initial violations are treated as misdemeanors to encourage compliance without overly penalizing first-time errors.
- Escalating consequences for repeated violations:
  - Multiple offenses within a year may trigger probationary oversight, including more frequent inspections.
  - Persistent noncompliance may lead to revocation proceedings for the alcohol license, with Council involvement limited only to appeals.
- The ordinance prioritizes practical enforcement: given limited police resources, repeated violations may not be detected immediately, so penalties are structured to account for realistic oversight capacity.
- The ordinance is designed to allow flexibility at the prosecutor level for dismissal or modification of penalties based on circumstances, supporting both compliance and fairness.

#### Appeals:

- Appeals focus on whether the law and procedural requirements were followed, not on leniency or “heartstrings.”
- The Council’s role is procedural, ensuring adherence to the ordinance rather than reevaluating the substantive violation.
- Businesses are given probationary opportunities to achieve compliance before facing license revocation.
- Public safety remains a key concern, particularly over-serving alcohol, which can have serious consequences.
- The ordinance intentionally does not include immediate revocation; a future comprehensive update of all alcohol codes will standardize revocation procedures.
- Council and staff will consult with business owners and stakeholders to ensure the ordinance is predictable, enforceable, and practical.

#### Key Principles:

1. Compliance first: Training and certification ensure employees understand alcohol laws.
2. Supportive enforcement: First-time and minor violations result in guidance and probation rather than severe penalties.
3. Escalation for repeat offenses: Persistent noncompliance triggers progressively stricter consequences, including potential license revocation.
4. Procedural integrity: Appeals address legal compliance, not subjective judgment.
5. Public safety: Preventing over-serving is a primary motivator, with structured oversight to reduce risk.
6. Business predictability: Ordinance designed to be clear, fair, and implementable without overburdening establishments.



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## Mayor Announcements, Events, Calendaring, Notes and/or Minutes from Boards and Commissions

### Council Updates / Notes:

- One Council member noted curiosity about when the zoo opened.
- Mayor Burtenshaw announced that the City's Economic Development Administrator (Catherine McClure) has accepted a new position at the Museum of Idaho.
  - Job description has been updated and the position will be reposted soon.
- Council President Francis will be giving a presentation on history and current events at the Methodist Church on Wednesday at 7 PM, open to the public.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 PM.

/s/ Emily Geisler  
Emily Geisler, City Clerk

/s/ Lisa Burtenshaw  
Lisa Burtenshaw, Mayor