



WHERE COMMUNITY AND SPIRIT MEET®

## **WORK SESSION MINUTES**

A work session of the Kirkwood City Council was held on January 15, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. at Kirkwood City Hall, 139 S. Kirkwood Road, Kirkwood, Missouri. Present were: Mayor Gibbons, Council Members Jaksetic, Luetzow, McLean, Schaefer, and Zimmer. Also in attendance were Interim Chief Administrative Officer David Weidler, City Clerk Laurie Ashe, Director of Parks and Recreation Kyle Henke, Director of Public Services Chris Krueger, and City Attorney Jackie Graves. Council Member Rheinacker participated via the phone.

### **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8, 2026 WORK SESSION MINUTES**

Motion was made by Council Member Zimmer and seconded by Council Member Schaefer to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2026 work session meeting. The minutes were approved with all in favor.

### **RECREATION SPECIAL EVENTS BUDGETING**

Director of Parks and Recreation Kyle Henke led the discussion on special events funding, focusing on the current estimated costs of the Freedom Festival fireworks display. Per the City's contracted fireworks company, a 21% – 38% cost increase is anticipated due to tariffs, raising the expense of fireworks from \$25,000 to \$30,000 – \$40,000 and placing the entirety of the festival at an estimated \$55,000. In addition to this, as 2026 is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence ("the anniversary of America"), there are talks of a second finale following the standard display; this would add \$5,000 – \$10,000.

The normal loss for the fireworks display is ~\$20,000. With rising cost and no contributions from the Electric or Water Departments (\$5,000 and \$1,000 respectively), this will significantly increase from last year.

Potential revenue streams were discussed, such as other enterprise funds, fundraising, sponsorships, and adding miscellaneous charges to the event (i.e. "premium" parking spaces).

- Enterprise funds: there was disagreement with this. Suggestions included budgeting the festival expenses into other accounts or placing budgeted money into a general fund. This will be revisited upon refinement of the budget.
- Fundraising: last year, the community raised \$14,000, but this potentiality is up in the air; mention was made of collecting cash at the festival and establishing a GoFundMe.
- Sponsorships: sponsors receive advertisement during the festival, but spaces are competing with the Greentree Festival, which offers a longer time of exposure.
- Miscellaneous charges: there was dissent with this idea.

The Freedom Festival is a broadly enjoyed community tradition with over 22,000 people in attendance last year, both from Kirkwood and surrounding communities, and its significance should be considered.

Council agreed to proceed with budget refinement in anticipation of the higher-cost scenario and advised to confirm vendor timelines for finalizing contracts.



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## PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL TIMING

Director of Public Services Chris Krueger and Lochmueller Group consultant Kelly Schaefer reported on pedestrian safety enhancements and subsequent observations and studies conducted at the intersections of Kirkwood Road & Woodbine Avenue and Kirkwood Road & Jefferson Avenue.

On September 23, 2025, the following changes were implemented at the above intersections:

- Increased all Leading Pedestrian Interval's (LPI's) from 3 to 5 seconds.
- Updated traffic signal programming so flashing yellow arrows (FYA) do not operate while a crosswalk is active (permissive lefts not allowed to cross the crosswalk when Walk or Don't Walk are shown).

On October 8, 2025, staff and Lochmueller Group took observations of pedestrian/traffic behavior, beginning at 3:00 PM. Nipher Middle School's dismissal on Woodbine Avenue was studied as the peak of pedestrian/traffic movement: because longer LPIs are recommended at intersections serving vulnerable pedestrians, such as children, and little to no negative impact on traffic operations was seen, this change was proven beneficial. Observations on Jefferson Avenue also showed little to no negative impact.

The presiding results of the study were as follows:

- Motorists waiting at an FYA pay less attention to pedestrians. Removing the permissive left protects pedestrians from inattentive drivers.
- There is no requirement from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) to increase the LPI to five seconds; however, increased LPI benefits areas of high-demand and/or vulnerable (children, seniors, those with mobility issues) pedestrian movement.
- The longer LPI and the no FYA when Walk/Don't Walk is on had little to no impact on traffic operations.

Staff recommended implementing these safety enhancements at the Kirkwood Road intersections at Monroe Avenue, Madison Avenue, Argonne Drive, and Essex Avenue. A further recommendation was made for a signal optimization plan to be included within the Kirkwood Road Improvement Project.

Council recommended implementation at the intersections of Adams and Washington, Geyer and Argonne, Geyer and Clark, Quan and Taylor, and Quan and Woodlawn (if not all intersections within the City), as well as the County-maintained Kirkwood Road intersections at Big Bend and Manchester. The raised topic of prohibiting certain right turns on red will be discussed at a later date.

The Lochmueller Group recommended a future study on traffic volume and signal timing optimization. Mindful consideration of upcoming road diets and development-induced traffic within these studies was discussed.

It was the consensus of the Council to move forward with the recommended safety enhancement implementations.



## ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT BUDGET UPDATE

Interim Chief Administrative Officer David Weidler presented a review of the Electric Department's current fiscal year budget. This presentation excluded energy and transmission costs to focus on controllable operating costs and capital costs. Cost cutting/reduction measures and projected expenses were reported in the actual budget, revised budget, and expected difference figures, across the following accounts:

- Administrative accounts
- Capital accounts
- Customer service accounts
- Distribution accounts

Administrative accounts saw reductions:

- Budgeted positions that remained unfilled
- Health insurance adjustments
- Expense reallocation
  - \$45,000 will be transferred from the Computer Maintenance line item to the Professional Services line item to eliminate the overspend shown in the former.

What is anticipated to change by the end of the fiscal year includes:

- Costs projected under personnel line items (Social Security, Medicare, retirement, deferred compensation), which are percentage rates based upon salary.
- Amounts allocated to transfer of other funds, which will draw against the general fund if over budget.

Effects to the administrative accounts were reporting discrepancies between ERP reports and revised projections, attributed to timing issues with salary postings, and a \$20,000 write-off for residential receivables relating to delinquent bills and partnership with Kirk Care.

Distribution accounts saw reductions and cuts through:

- Minimization and regulation of overtime
  - The overtime line item increased from an average <\$400,000 to a projected \$750,000. This projection should be lowered by budget finalization.
- Avoiding contract work for outages, natural disasters, installations performed during non-peak hours, and industrial work requiring weekend scheduling

Notable effects to distribution accounts:

- Capitalizable costs are undergoing an audit for transfer from operating to capital accounts to be added to the asset sheet, such as additional equipment/machinery expenditure.
- There is potential for variance in major event expenses.
- The monetary and labor relationship between Ameren and the City of Kirkwood is undergoing review as it relates to lighting systems and fees charged by the City.



Council asked staff to return with more information on payment and maintenance between the City and Ameren.

Customer service accounts saw reductions and cuts through:

- Adjustments to health insurance, training, equipment, and maintenance charges
- Pushing credit card processing fees to the customer for utility billing

Council recommended research into the costs of credit card processing. The current gateway merchant contracted with the City should be compared to competitors like credit unions in consideration of percentage fees. The cost of these autopay options should be weighed against their convenience to the customer, keeping in mind the return on delinquent bills.

Capital accounts saw spending in excess of projections:

- Previously unencumbered prior-year orders
- Blanket agreement expenditures
- Necessary equipment purchases

Year-to-date capital expenditures approached \$3 million. Staff confirmed all invoices will be processed before fiscal year end with no carry-forward encumbrances unless formally reappropriated.

Power, capacity, and transmission costs will be separated from the distribution improvements line item into their own discrete line items to improve transparency in operational spending. Revenue is at approximately 80% of budget while expenses are at approximately 85.7%. A loss is anticipated for the fiscal year despite recent rate increases. Staff is waiting for full collection cycles (60–90 days post-billing) before finalizing revenue impact analysis.

Major procedural reforms include:

- Mandatory encumbrance at time of contract
- Formal Council approval for any project over \$15,000
- No splitting projects to avoid approval thresholds
- Required purchase orders before vendors commence work
- Division-level budget controls within ERP
- Capital accounts restricted line-by-line
- Written justification required for negative balances
- Vendors proceeding without purchase orders may not be paid

Council requested public-facing communication outlining reforms and financial safeguards. Staff will prepare a summarized update for residents highlighting corrective actions.

### **MOTION TO CLOSE THE MEETING**

Motion was made by Council Member Zimmer and seconded by Council Member McLean to close the meeting pursuant to RSMo Chapter 610.021 (1 – Legal & 12 – Contract Negotiations).



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Roll Call:

|                            |                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mayor Gibbons              | “Yes”                              |
| Council Member Jaksetic    | “Yes”                              |
| Council Member Luetzow     | “Yes”                              |
| Council Member McLean      | “Yes”                              |
| Council Member Rheinnecker | Attended via phone and cannot vote |
| Council Member Schaefer    | “Yes”                              |
| Council Member Zimmer      | “Yes”                              |

The meeting was closed. Council Member Rheinnecker left the meeting.

**MOTION TO OPEN THE MEETING**

Motion was made by Council Member Schaefer and seconded by Council Member Zimmer to open the meeting.

Roll Call:

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Mayor Gibbons              | “Yes”  |
| Council Member Jaksetic    | “Yes”  |
| Council Member Luetzow     | “Yes”  |
| Council Member McLean      | “Yes”  |
| Council Member Rheinnecker | Absent |
| Council Member Schaefer    | “Yes”  |
| Council Member Zimmer      | “Yes”  |

The meeting was opened.

Since no further matters were to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

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Laurie Asche  
City Clerk