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Tenino Council hears plea for more business

Future short-term rental ordinance proposed

By Dan Fisher
News Editor

During the work session prior to the start of the May 26 meeting of the Tenino City Council, Council Member Adam Carney spoke on his vision of the city's economic development.

"The question is, what can we do to make Tenino more attractive for businesses five, 10 or 15 years down the road," said Carney, a former member of Tenino's Planning Commission.

"Several things have been suggested, and one of those things was the idea of short-term rentals – motels, air B&B's, that sort of thing," Carney said. "This is a great little stop, a quiet stop for people traveling through the area. I'd like to look into an ordinance allowing that."

Carney also addressed the growing problem of traffic in Tenino.

"Some of these crosswalks in the city are a little precarious," he said. "I like the solution of signs that light up, but we need to know what that costs. There's also the possibility of brackets on the light poles

with orange flags for pedestrians to use when crossing, like they have in some other places."

Carney's final subject during the work session was that he would like to see a timeline included in reports from Public Works on when they expect to complete their various projects.

Fellow Council Member Jeff Eisel had another subject to discuss concerning two fireworks ordinances on the agenda for that evening's meeting.

"This ordinance doesn't allow fireworks on New Year's at all," Eisel said. "But the state law says that any law passed by a town or city cannot take effect any sooner than one year from passage, which means the new ordinance would not be in effect this coming New Year's, putting us at odds with state law."

The proposed ordinances are 941, amending the Tenino Municipal Code to align allowed discharge times with Thurston County code; and 92, amending the TMC to align retail sales and purchase times with Thurston County code.

Because of the concerns expressed by Eisel, in the regular meeting both ordinances were tabled until the next Council meeting on June 9.

Also during the regular meeting, council approved by a 3-0 vote, with Mayor Dave Watterson and Council Member



Photo by Dan Fisher

Tenino Council Member Adam Carney expresses his desire to assure economic development in Tenino during the pre-meeting work session on May 26.

Elaine Klamm both absent, to approve the Mayor signing an amendment to the city's contract with the Department of Commerce Public Works Board, allowing Tenino to pay interest only on the loan repayment in 2026, with final payment to be paid in increments from 2027 through 2031.

"It will cost us more in the long run, but it will help with the cash-flow problems we have right now," said City Clerk/Treasurer Nancy Reddick.

Council also approved a

three-year contract extension with Right Services for city computer maintenance and IT services

In reports, George Sharp submitted a written report on the Tenino Area Chamber of Commerce, noting that the Chamber's monthly meeting June 17 will be at 5:30 p.m. at the Sandstone Café.

Reddick, in her Clerk/Treasurer's report, told the council that Tenino had been approved by the Dept. of Commerce to skip the \$387,000 monthly payments

on the Public Works loan, paying interest only for the remainder of 2026.. She said 234 customers have signed up for electronic billing, with 82 signed up for the auto-pay service.

"It's been a challenge, but every week it gets better," Reddick said.

Council Member Tianne Curtiss, who also organizes the Oregon Trail Days Parade for the OTD Committee, said Fred Golden wants a wagon train to be included running through the parade route this year.

Rochester schools deliver SIP reports to School Board

Many goals prove too high to meet

By Dan Fisher
News Editor

Each of the four school buildings in the Rochester School District gave a report on that building's School Improvement Plan (SIP) as the school year winds down, during the monthly business meeting of the Rochester School Board on May 27.

Each report addressed three goals set at the start of the school year, and many of those wound up not being met.

Rochester Primary School (RPS) representatives began the report by telling the board they hoped to get their 80 percent of its students to proficiency in iReady math scores, but as of mid-May had only reached 54 percent and is working on improvement.

Goal two was for 80 percent of students meeting proficiency in Reach phonics. The students also fell short in this effort, though they did reach a level of 71 percent.

The third goal was to increase Social-Emotional learning from 65 percent in September to 95 percent. Figures showed the school population at



Photo by Dan Fisher

Grand Mound Elementary School Principal Dan Aragon gives part of his school's SIP report to the Rochester School Board while Assistant Principal Madison Newman waits.

74 percent at the end of the third academic quarter, with the final results not yet available.

Grand Mound Elementary School (GMES) reported its first goal was for its students (in grades 3-5) to feel safe, supported, connected and engaged, by means of increasing Amplifier-qualified teachers from 60 percent in September to 80 per-

cent by the end of the school year. This goal was achieved, as 100 percent of GMES teachers had become qualified by May.

A general proficiency increase (Goal two) was not met, with overall proficiency at 28.1 percent in May (10.1 percent for students with disabilities).

Goal three was for GMES to have less than 400 disci-

pline referrals for the year, but the county in May had reached 664. It was noted that March had 109 referrals, attributed to "school fatigue," representing an extended period with no school breaks.

The report for Rochester Middle School (RMS) was that the first goal – getting 77 percent of multi-lingual students

to Typical or better growth on iReady reading – had only reached 61 percent as of late May. The second goal, that 60 percent of students with IEP's (individual education programs) show typical or better growth, also came up short, with 43 percent meeting that mark.

The third RMS goal is the reach 72 percent in regular attendance among students. This came closer, being at 68 percent at the time of the board meeting. The school representative noted that the state average for middle schools is at 64 percent.

Rochester High School's SIP report was that the first goal was for 77 percent of multi-lingual students show proficiency on ELA and SBA from 58 to 70 percent. Both were currently at 66 percent, slightly higher than the state average of 65 percent.

Goal two was for multi-lingual student performance on the SBA assessment test from 0 to 25 percent. These figures were not yet available.

The third RHS goal was to improve student-to-student and student-to-staff interactions by reducing staff referrals, with was reported to be "going very well" this year.

It was also announced that this year's RHS Commencement Ceremony will be at 2 p.m. Sunday, June 7, at the Saint Martin's College pavilion.

WSDOT updates its Roadside Memorial Program

OLYMPIA – After a thorough review of Washington's Roadside Memorial Program, which honors victims of traffic collisions with roadside memorial signs, the Washington State Department has released updated program guidelines. The guidelines for the memorial signs were developed with feedback from the victims' families and the public.

The updated policy allows sponsors to renew signs every ten years, indefinitely. The signs include victim names and a safety message. They are placed as close as possible to the collision site.

Secretary of Transportation Julie Meredith directed WSDOT leaders to give the program a careful examination, ensuring it balances important safety messaging with an opportunity for people to honor a loved one.

"We wish these signs weren't needed," Secretary Meredith said. "Every single one is the story of a child, partner, friend – someone who was loved and didn't make it home."

Policy updates

An online open house held in fall 2025 gathered feedback on proposed program updates, including sign renewals and

costs.

- Family members or other sponsors will need to cover the costs of installing and maintaining a new sign. A review of these costs set the current price at \$1,500 but that amount will be reviewed and adjusted every two years to ensure it accurately reflects the cost of fabrication, installation and maintenance.
- To keep signs in good repair, sponsors will be required to replace the sign every ten years and pay the current cost. If a sponsor chooses not

to replace the sign, it will be removed and made available for the sponsor to pick up.

Currently, there are more than 1,000 signs in the program, with 600 at 265 locations that are more than 10 years old. WSDOT sent letters to current program participants informing them of the new program policy and will work compassionately with families to help them adapt to any changes.

The program began in 1994 and allows families to honor victims with multiple safety messages, including warnings about drinking and driving, speeding,

distracted driving and motorcycle safety.

Correction

The last name of Chloe Suess, one of the Top Ten scholars for the Tenino High School Class of 2026, was misspelled in the story and photo cutline from the Tenino School Board meeting that appeared in the May 20 edition of The Tenino Independent and Rochester Sun News. We apologize for the error.