

**City of Baldwin City**  
**Minutes**  
**Tuesday, February 17, 2026**  
**Regular Council Meeting**

**A. Call to Order**

The Baldwin City Council was called to Regular Session at 7:00 p.m. at the Baldwin City Community Center, 712 Chapel Street, with Mayor Gerald Cullumber presiding.

Present were Council Members: Jay King, Peter Wentz, Cory Venable, Scott Lauridsen and Julie Constantinescu.

Also, attending: Russ Harding-City Administrator; Amara Packard-City Clerk; City Attorney-Jessica Wortham; Shiloh Afonja-Deputy City Clerk; and Chief Patrick-Police Chief.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

Peter Wentz moved and Cory Venable seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried with a vote of 5 yes and 0 no.

**C. Consent Agenda**

Julie Constantinescu moved and Jay King seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion carried with a vote of 5 yes and 0 no.

1. Minutes 2.03.2026
2. Scheduled Claims List

**D. Public Comment**

Tina Rakes - Baldwin City - Wanted to thank the mayor for his report from the library during the last meeting. Tina also asked the council to reconsider the half price building permits. She felt that could possibly make a difference on if the city needed to raise utility rates or not.

**E. Special Reports or Presentations**

**F. Old Business**

**G. New Business**

1. Ordinance 1531 - Gas Franchise

The gas franchise agreement is up for renewal, it is approved every 20 years. To keep it in line with other utilities, the ordinance states a 6% franchise fee, up from the previous 3%. Those funds go to the general fund.

Cory Venable and Jay King are concerned for that type of increase to the gas company when it will likely be passed directly through to the customer.

The past year the city received approximately \$45,000.00 from the gas franchise fee. This ordinance will be tabled until the next meeting.

Tina Rakes asked for clarification on this ordinance.

## 2. Ordinance 1532 - Electric Rates

There are two different electric user types. Demand customers and non-demand customers.

There are two options to choose from. Option one figures up the debt from the one year. Option two spreads it out over three years. Your debts will go up and down as you pay something off, or add more debt. With the three year average you won't have the ups and downs, you spread it out over 3 years. Overall, both figure out to be the 2.43% increase. Council discussed their concerns of raising the rates, and the overall health of the utility and reserve fund.

Scott Lauridsen proposed another possibility. He suggested leaving the rate the same for residential, and going with the three year average for the debt fee increase.

Cory Venable said he likes Scott's alternative.

The council would like to circle back to electric rates after the other rates have been discussed.

## 3. Ordinance 1533 - Trash Rates

The contract that was signed with Green Environmental started on February 1st 2024 and runs through January 31st of 2031. According to the contract, they can raise the rates per the consumer price index each year. Trash would increase by 7.86% and recycling would increase by 5.28%. Council discussed the current contract and said that we need to start looking at how to entice other trash companies to bid when this contract is up for renewal.

Jerry Smith-Baldwin City-says that the gas franchise fee and trash rates are not a topic of discussion because they are going to go up because of the costs associated with them. He reminded the council that they are working for the citizens and they need to make their decisions based on that.

Cory Venable moved and Peter Wentz seconded to approve Ordinance 1533. Motion passes 5-0.

Julie Constantinescu-yes, Scott Lauridsen-yes, Cory Venable-yes, Peter Wentz-yes and Jay King-yes.

## 4. Ordinance 1534 - Water Rates

This new water rate would increase by 4.5%. The increase received from Lawrence was 9% for 2026.

Scott Lauridsen reminded the council that they need to be thinking about the replacement project for the water line from Lawrence and where the funds will come from. He suggests keeping it on the agenda to keep discussing the process and funding for this project. There needs to be a design study to give a better idea on cost and process.

The council is looking at all options for the water line project. Currently the water line from Lawrence is Baldwin's only means of water. Other water sources are being looked into.

Jay King said in a perfect world we would have two sources of water, but knows that the city cannot afford that.

Jerry Smith-Baldwin City-says that someone should try to make a connection with Johnson County on an additional source of water.

Peter Wentz moved and Julie Constantinescu seconded to approve the increase of water rates as

shown in ordinance 1534. Motion passes 4-1.

Jay King-no, Peter Wentz-yes, Cory Venable-yes, Scott Lauridsen-yes, and Julie Constantinescu-yes.

5. Ordinance 1535 - Sewer Rates

The City's financial advisor has projected an increase of 8.15% needed in the sewer fund.

The sewer department got fully staffed in 2025, along with some preventative maintenance on some sewer lines in town causing that utility to fall behind.

Jay King said that other departments are understaffed as well, and would like to eventually see all departments fully staffed.

Scott Lauridsen moved and Peter Wentz seconded to pass ordinance 1535 as presented. Motion passes 4-1.

Julie Constantinescu-yes, Scott Lauridsen-yes, Cory Venable-yes, Peter Wentz-yes, and Jay King-no.

2. Council went back to Item 2 under New Business to discuss electric rates. Cory Venable asked how everyone felt about Scott's proposal on leaving the residential rates the same and adjusting the debt fee to support the debt for the electric utility. The demand customers would still require an increase so the residential customers don't carry it all since the demand customers do not have a debt fee. The demand customers would increase by 1%.

Tina Rakes-Baldwin City-asked for help in understanding where the city receives electricity from. Can those suppliers raise our rates? Do we buy from the open market? Is the council looking at any renewable energy options?

The city has a large portfolio from where it receives electricity. The city buys 25% from the open market.

The federal government got rid of all their subsidies.

The city did approve the Pratt Solar Project right before Jay King took office.

Glenn Rodden-605 Heritage Dr.-let the council know that the tax credits from the federal government are still available, the industrial tax credits are still out there. The project has to be started by the middle of 2026 or end it at the end of 2027. Reminded the city that they still have a one megawatt renewable project that is coming up for purchase.

Julie Constantinescu said that the megawatt solar that is out at Public Works has had a lot of problems, right now they are having to replace all the inverters. With that being said, in her committee meeting, she didn't know that they would be too interested in purchasing it.

Scott Lauridsen moved and Cory Venable seconded to pass ordinance 1532 with the following amendments: residential rates would be .1411 per kilowatt hour; commercial, heavy commercial, industrial, public schools, and university rates per kilowatt hour and demand would increase by 1%. The residential rate, city, church, clubhouse, sorority and fraternity rates would match the residential rate at .1411 per kilowatt hour. Motion passes 4-1.

Julie Constantinescu-yes, Scott Lauridsen-yes, Cory Venable-yes, Peter Wentz-yes, and Jay King-no.

## H. Committee Reports

1. Budget and Finance - Scott Lauridsen/Peter Wentz

- Discussed rates, reserves

- Discussed feedback from utility rate forum
- Talked about different ways to help lower income citizens

Next meeting 2/20/2026 at 9:00am, second floor of City Hall

2. Community Development - Cory Venable/Peter Wentz

- The next meeting will be at the community center, in the executive room at 3:00. A couple of ABC officers will be there to answer questions from the committee and business owners on the common consumption that has been approved for Baldwin City.

Next meeting will be 2/23/2026 at 4:00pm, second floor of City Hall

3. Public Safety - Jay King/Cory Venable

Next meeting will be 2/19/2026 at 4:00pm, second floor of City Hall

4. Public Works and Utilities - Julie Constantinescu/Jay King

- **New Substation:**

- HVAC units have been installed and switchgear have been delivered. Mid States has been setting the switchgear and completing the wiring inside the building.
- Chase has been working with the fiber company to coordinate the installation of the fiber needed for controls and monitoring at the substation.
- Pat's crew continues to make progress on setting poles and starting to move services to the new poles.

- **Newton substation:**

- The repair in December to the tap changer control appears to have fixed the issue and the cold weather in January did not cause any issues.

- **Solar:**

- Continue to have a few roof top applications submitted.
- Expecting Evergy crews to start replacing inverters soon.

- **Winter storm:**

- January 23rd the Conservative Operations Advisory issued a heightened grid awareness. This was one step below the requirement for all available generation to be online. Several municipalities were called on during that few days to generate, however, Baldwin was not. There seems to be as much grid instability in extreme cold conditions, as the extreme heat during the summer.

- **Evergy meter location:**

- March 3rd and 10th have been set aside as tentative dates for Evergy to relocate their meter from the Newton substation to the corner of 6th and Orange. The power plant will be generating power during that time, approximately 12 hours.
- Snow removal on January 24-25 went well. Extreme cold temps are challenging as salt mix doesn't work well when temps are below 15 degrees.
- There was discussion regarding selling the street sweeper.
- Chip seal list for summer 2026 should be completed soon. Final list will be sent out for bids and recommendation will be brought to the council for approval.
- Jackson Pool has not finished the repairs yet on the pool.
- PW crew removed the dumped items from Blackjack Park and burned a large brush pile as well.
- Discussed personal storage shed at the Community Garden.
- Installed 8 new water services on Eisenhower and Washington St.

- North Lawrence Meter has stopped transmitting data. Contacted Sensus and they will be out to determine the cause.
- Completed interviews for an open maintenance tech position.

Next meeting 3/12/2026 at 9:00am, Public Works Conference Room

5. Strategic Planning-Scott Lauridsen/Julie Constantinescu

Next meeting TBD at 10:00am, second floor of City Hall

6. Lake Advisory Committee-Jay King/Julie Constantinescu

- Still moving forward on grant applications.
- Brought in a gentleman from the professional disc golf association who had suggestions on how to make the course more attractive.

Jay King praised the Lake Committee on their hard work.

Next meeting 3/3/2026 at 6:00pm, Executive Room at the Community Center

**I. City Administrator and Staff Comments**

Russ Harding gave an update on the water line project. The grants haven't come out just yet, but they are hoping to get the applications in so hopefully cover part of the design process.

City Attorney Jessica Wortham urged the council to reach out their representatives regarding House Bill 2558 which is currently in committee which would help municipalities with their water infrastructure by increasing those grants beginning in 2027.

**J. Council & Mayor Comments**

Scott Lauridsen asked Jay King on his no votes, if it was because the increases were too high, or too low. Jay stated they were too high.

Mayor Cullumber said the city was back on the Mayors Association for the State of Kansas, and will receive training. There is training for the council members if they have interest in attending. The city will cover the expense of the training.

**K. Executive Session**

**L. Adjourn**

Julie Constantinescu moved and Cory Venable seconded to adjourn the regular meeting. Motion passes 5-0. Time: 9:30 p.m.

Attest:

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Amara M. Packard  
City Clerk