

**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
SOLOMON KS 67480
January 5, 2026 at 6:00 pm**

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor Brandy Gray called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Council Present: Shawn Kirby, Jennifer Cross, Kelley VanDeCreek, Brian Duryea, Colten Kohman

Staff Present: Krista Radke, Randy Paden, Andrea McCook, Dan Britt

Others Present: Jerry Davis, Chris Ade, Aaron Martin, Kyle Bowers, Jaelyn Ecton, Mike Teeters, Darci Teeters, Deb Ohlde

APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR January 5, 2026 CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Motion by Jennifer Cross to approve the agenda, seconded by Shawn Kirby, 5 Yays, 0 Nays.

Motion carried.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS & COMMUNICATIONS

None.

3. OATH OF OFFICE

Shawn Kirby, Colten Kohman, and Brian Duryea were all sworn in to office by the City Clerk.

4. PRESENTATION/REPORTS

1. NCRPC- Deb Ohlde, representing the North Central Regional Planning Commission, updated the council on the city's water project. She reviewed the project's lengthy history, which began in 2018, and outlined the current funding structure—combining nearly \$7.5 million in USDA backing and roughly \$1.4 million in KDHE loans. She explained that KDHE loans would provide interim financing, replaced upon project completion by long-term USDA loans, potentially at better interest rates and with a 40-year term. The city has also applied for a Kansas Water Office (KWO) grant of about \$5.4 million to help offset costs. Grant awards are highly competitive and will be announced in February. Deb clarified that if the city's grant is awarded, it would significantly reduce the debt burden. She described the process and strategy for acquiring the required temporary and permanent easements, noting that, for federally funded projects, certain acquisition procedures must be followed even when the city doesn't buy the land. Many owners often donate easements since it benefits local water access. She also addressed an increase in administrative costs: federal grants that previously covered the city's administrative contract have ended, so she's requesting the city consider increasing the USDA portion of her organization's administrative fee. Finally, Deb outlined the support NCRPC provides, including handling grant paperwork, documentation, bid advertising, compliance with wage and minority business requirements, as well as on-site interviews for payroll compliance. She emphasized her team's commitment to guiding the city through complex funding and reporting processes, and she welcomed any questions about the ongoing project or funding details.

2. Solomon Housing Authority- Jae Ecton reported that the housing authority has one unit scheduled for an exit inspection the next day, which means that unit will soon be vacated and offered to someone from the wait list. Additionally, Jae announced that a new maintenance man has been hired.

3. Planning & Zoning- Kyle Bowers, the new chairman, reported positive progress for the Planning and Zoning Board, including having a full board of nine members for the first time in over two years, representing a broad range of the community. He reviewed recent actions like resolving a variance issue, which led to process improvements. The board is currently reviewing and proposing updates to the city's code book and comprehensive community plan, with a goal of making all necessary code changes at once for efficiency. An ongoing project is a path in the park and an ADA sidewalk project to make the city park wheelchair-accessible. They hope to secure grant funding. There is also ongoing discussion and work on storm drainage issues and

code changes to better align city regulations with current needs. Mayor Gray encouraged them to prioritize, streamline public notices, and collaborate with experienced community members.

4. Dickinson County Sheriff- Summary of activity for December 2025.

18 traffic stops, 4 suspicious activity, 4 speak with an officer, 2 alarms, 2 welfare checks, 1 arrest, 2 psychiatric emergencies, 1 citizen check, 1 civil matter, 1 drugs, 1 harassment, 1 missing person, 1 noise, 1 open door, 1 park check, 1 traffic accident. They had 42 calls with 219 hours.

5. Solomon Fire Department- Chief Paden reported that the fire department received their new fire truck on New Year's Eve and is in the process of loading equipment and training the team. The department adopted new fire reporting software this year, moving away from the old system due to federal changes, and the new system is already in use for report submissions. For December, the department responded to 11 calls, 6 medical, 2 CO. In County 1 vehicle accident, 1 med call, 1 smoke scare.

For the entire year 2025, the department handled 198 calls—154 in the city, 31 in Lincoln Township, and 13 outside their district—with detailed breakdowns including 6 building fires, 1 transport vehicle fire, 5 grass fires, 2 trash fires, 2 other fires, 96 EMS calls, 8 vehicle accidents, 2 CO leaks, 3 CO calls, 3 power line issues, 1 smoke removal, 9 canceled in route, false alarms, 10 public service calls, 19 false alarms, 5 weather watches, 10 other calls, and 6 training sessions.

6. Public Works Director- Dan returned to work on December 30 after a 6-week absence and commended his team for effectively managing their responsibilities during his absence. He reported ongoing progress on a new house build for the Johnson family on North Maple, which will require a new water meter installation and sewer main identification work. Dan highlighted an issue at the limb dump where someone illegally dumped construction debris. The department has increased locking and monitoring of the area, especially on weekends, as required by KDHE regulations to avoid citations. Signage is being considered to remind users of the rules. Dan also noted that discussion is ongoing about infrastructure and comprehensive planning, and he is working on catching up after being away, with no further major updates at this time.

7. City Clerk- Andrea McCook reported that the Christmas house lighting contest was a success with good participation and many donated items for Neighbor to Neighbor. The “Operation Gorilla” effort also resulted in generous donations and extras will be distributed at January's “neighbor to neighbor” event. She updated the council on work related to the new fire truck loan and ongoing paperwork for a Sales Tax ordinance, which is being filed with the state for activation by April 1. Andrea also announced that the city's vaccination clinic will take place on March 14, a week earlier than usual, with pet renewal information to be publicized soon. Building permits for three new homes (including one on North Maple and two more on NE 7th Street). She also mentioned that park sign project funds have been gathered and that an upgraded park sign will soon be picked up and installed by Brad Homman. Andrea concluded with an update on beginning the process of preparing easement letters for the water project.

8. Municipal Services Clerk- Krista Radke reported the December court docket included 22 cases. The next court date will be January 15, 2026 at 4 pm. For utilities and billing, Krista noted a growing number of customers enrolling in auto-pay and paperless billing, and she plans to coordinate a marketing campaign to increase sign-ups. Due to the holidays, billing processing was delayed, but utility statements were sent out with new rates, including a higher-than-expected infrastructure charge which prompted some customer inquiries. Krista did a billing review to make sure the software was billing correctly. She also began using new accounts payable (AP) processing software (Ramp), which is in the early stages. Krista has also looked into upgrading Jayhawk Software to the new Solus upgrade to be able to utilize more features.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Council reviewed consent agenda items including:

- (1) Approval of minutes dated December 1, 2025.
- (2) December Check Register & Payroll Summary & November Fund Reports.
- (3) License Approval- Attached list

A motion by Brian Duryea moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Kelley VanDeCreek, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Council President

Motion by Kelley VanDeCreek to appoint Shawn Kirby as Council President, seconded by Jennifer Cross, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

2. Designate Official Bank

Solomon State Bank will continue to be our designated bank.

3. Designate Legal Newspaper

The council discussed whether to continue using the Abilene Reflector Chronicle as the official city newspaper or to transition some or all legal notices to the city's website. The city attorney explained that, under Kansas law, the city can opt to designate its website as an official newspaper through a charter ordinance, allowing for more flexibility and transparency. No motion or change was made at this meeting; council members will seek feedback, and the issue will be revisited after further research and planning.

4. 2026 IRS Standard Mileage Rate

Motion by Jennifer Cross to approve 72.5 cents/mile mileage rate, seconded by Colten Kohman, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

5. Mayor's Appointments

The mayor's annual appointments were reviewed and outlined by Brandy Gray, covering roles such as City Attorney, City Clerk, City Treasurer, Public Works Director, Building Inspector, Municipal Judge, Prosecutor, Chief of Police, and various fire department positions. Most appointments remained unchanged from the prior year.

Motion by Shawn Kirby to approve the appointments, seconded by Brian Duryea, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

6. STO & UPOC Updates

The council briefly discussed the annual review and update of the Standard Traffic Ordinance (STO) and Uniform Public Offense Code (UPOC). Brandy Gray noted that these codes were updated in the Fall and that the city will continue to review them annually and update as needed.

7. Resolution 2026-01 GAAP Waiver

Motion by Kelley VanDeCreek to approve Resolution 2026-01 GAAP waiver, seconded by Brian Duryea, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

8. Amended Sheriff's contract

The council discussed an amended sheriff's contract after Sheriff Davis discovered and corrected a budgeting error that had inadvertently included several sheriff's office expenses twice in the contract calculation. Items such as uniforms, dues and memberships, office supplies, and miscellaneous personnel costs were removed, lowering the monthly contract rate.

Motion by Shawn Kirby to approve the amended contract for both 2026 and 2027, seconded by Jennifer Cross, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

9. Municipal Agreement State of KS Setoff Program

The council reviewed and renewed a longstanding municipal agreement with the State of Kansas known as the "setoff program." This program allows the city to refer unpaid debts (such as delinquent utility accounts) to the state, which can then attempt to collect the debt—often by intercepting state income tax refunds or other payments that would otherwise go to the debtor. City Attorney Aaron Martin confirmed the effectiveness of this approach, noting it's a cost-efficient alternative to using private collection firms, which would typically charge a contingency fee. While the program is not new to the city, the agreement needed to be renewed for the upcoming year.

Motion by Jennifer Cross to approve the Municipal Agreement with State of KS Setoff Program, seconded by Kelley VanDeCreek, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

10. Uniform allowance

The council discussed updates to the staff uniform benefit program. Mayor Gray proposed replacing the current detailed voucher system with a more flexible allowance, letting staff use their budget as needed for uniform items—such as shirts, outerwear, boots, or

jeans—rather than restricting funds to specific purchases. The proposal also included a small allowance for administrative staff to support their representational roles.

Motion by Colten Kohman to approve the uniform proposal, seconded by Brian Duryea, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

11. Fire Truck Updated Loan

The council discussed consolidating previous purchases of the fire truck chassis and the outfitting into a single new loan, structured as a municipal lease purchase agreement. The updated arrangement features a new payment schedule, with the first lease payment due in May and the loan intended to be paid off by 2030. The interest rate for the new loan decreased slightly to 4.28% compared to the original estimate.

Motion by Brian Duryea to approve the updated loan with First Bank, seconded by Shawn Kirby, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

12. Consider Ordinance 779 Pet Registration Deadlines

Ordinance 779 was discussed to update the city's pet registration deadline for dogs and cats. Previously, the deadline was March 1, which created compliance issues because the city's tag and shot clinics occur later in March. The proposed change moves the registration deadline to March 31, making it more convenient for residents and reducing administrative issues.

Motion by Jennifer Cross to approve Ordinance 779, and both the code sections for dogs and cats will be updated to reflect the new March 31 deadline.

13. Water Utility: Infrastructure Project Update

The council discussed progress on the water utility improvements, focusing on the right-of-way easement process. The goal is to organize documentation, complete property valuations, and notify homeowners by the end of February. The CES engineering group is waiting for the city to finalize the prioritization of water line segments. Dan is leading the effort to measure and prioritize the projects, so CES can estimate project phases and costs. The city is amending its contract with CES to take well house projects out of the main water line contract, aiming to avoid project delays. Efforts to transparently update customers about upcoming water rate changes are ongoing, including publishing an article and communicating with residents. The city expects to receive important updates on engineering design approval and grant status within 60–90 days.

7. CITY MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMENTS

The new Fire Truck is outside and meeting attendees and council were encouraged to go out and take a look.

8. CALENDAR REMINDERS

Monday, January 26th at 6PM-Council Workshop

Monday, February 2nd at 6PM- City Council Meeting

9. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn at 7:57 PM by Jennifer Cross, seconded by Colten Kohman, 5 Yays, 0 Nays. Motion Carried.

Signed:


Brandy Gray
Mayor

Attest:


Andrea McCook
City Clerk