



The City Council of the City of Festus, Missouri met for a Community Benefits Work Session on Monday, March 2, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at Four-Oh-Six located at 406 West Main Street, Festus, Missouri.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Richards called the Work Session to order at 5:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present:

Councilman Boyer
Councilman Collier
Councilman Wehner
Councilman Venez
Councilman Cook
Mayor Richards

Absent:

Councilwoman Templeton
Councilman Dennis
Councilman Tinnin

Also in attendance:

Public Works Director and Interim City Administrator Michael Christopher, City Clerk Leah Smith, Finance Director Michelle Vaughn, Building and Planning Director Jim Walker, Police Chief Doug Wendel, Fire Chief Jeff Broombaugh, and City Attorney Brian Malone.

Other community stakeholders in attendance:

Dennis Gannon County Executive, Jefferson County, David Courtway Director of Administration, Jefferson County, Jordan Dalaviras Area Liaison, MoDOT, John Linhorst Vice President of Finance & Operations, Jefferson College, Dr. Nicki Ruess Superintendent, Festus R-6 School District, Tracy Howell Chief, Joachim-Plattin Ambulance District, Chuck Boyer, Hematite Fire Protection District, Steve Etcher Consultant/Partner, MarksNelson Advisors

II. Mayor & City Council Discussion

Steve Etcher, of MarksNelson Advisors, LLC, an economic development advisor with 37 years of experience, presented to the council on strategies to attract capital investment and model community impacts of the potential development of a data center. His role is to advise on incentive opportunities, provide guidance on programs that enhance and



elevate the community, and ensure certainty and predictability for both developers and taxing jurisdictions. Key incentive tools discussed included PILOT agreements (payment in lieu of taxes), community benefit development agreements, performance agreements, infrastructure agreements, and term sheets.

Tax considerations covered real estate taxes (Chapter 68 state program and Chapter 100 city program), personal property taxes, gross receipts (franchise fees), and sales tax exemptions, with examples illustrating the financial impact of large-scale investments. The discussion emphasized gathering community input, prioritizing capital projects, and identifying opportunities to enhance public safety, parks, fire services, STEM and workforce development programs, and infrastructure such as roads, traffic studies, and post-construction maintenance.

Council members also discussed considerations for taxing jurisdiction rollbacks, contractual safeguards, PILOT versus chapter bonds, franchise fee responsibilities, and repurposing land or buildings for future commercial use. Environmental protections, such as maintaining tree buffers and monitoring noise, air, and water systems, were highlighted, along with the importance of collaboration with schools and colleges.

Mr. Etcher challenged the stakeholders to think as a community patron with ideas that will enrich the community. Councilman Cook shared that he would like to enhance fire, parks, and assist the homeless initiative. Executive Gannon shared that ideas like providing a program or investment pool for personal infrastructure would benefit unincorporated parts of Jefferson County.

Councilman Wehner discussed providing more manpower to emergency services, fixing communication issues, addressing growth and fleet endowments. MoDOT Liasion Jordan Dalaviras shared the jobs and traffic a data center would bring to the area would need to be addressed from the infrastructure and transportation standpoint.

Next steps include engaging the community, coordinating with the city attorney and planning/zoning processes, evaluating financial models for incentives, and continuing discussions on prioritizing projects that enrich the community.

Mayor Richards closed the meeting stating that all stakeholders need to think about their needs. Mayor shared that a 1,000 foot buffer zone between the closest house in Ashford Place and The Ridge subdivisions, a sound, air and vibration testing station and a closed loop water system are non-negotiables for the City.



III. Adjournment

Councilman Cook moved to close the Work Session and was seconded by Councilman Collier.

Vote:

Councilman Boyer:	Aye
Councilman Collier:	Aye
Councilwoman Templeton:	Absent
Councilman Wehner:	Aye
Councilman Dennis:	Absent
Councilman Venz:	Aye
Councilman Cook:	Aye
Councilman Tinnin:	Absent

Motion carried and the work session adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

3/9/2026

Date - Approved by Council


Leah Smith
City Clerk
City of Festus, Missouri