



The City Council of the City of Festus, Missouri, met on Monday, March 23, 2026, for a Regular Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at Festus High School Gymnasium located at 501 Westwind Drive, Festus, Missouri.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Richards called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present:

Councilman Boyer
Councilman Collier
Councilwoman Templeton
Councilman Wehner
Councilman Dennis via Zoom
Councilman Venz
Councilman Cook
Councilman Tinnin
Mayor Richards

Absent:

None

Also in attendance:

Interim City Administrator and Public Works Director Michael Christopher, City Clerk Leah Smith, and City Attorney Brian Malone.

Pledge of Allegiance

Recited

II. Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of the Minutes

- a. March 9, 2026 – Work Session
- b. March 9, 2026 – Regular Session

2. Approval of Bills

Mayor Richards asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mayor Richards announced the bills were in the amount of \$243,071.77.

Motion to approve the consent agenda, the bills, and minutes was made by Councilman Collier, seconded by Councilman Boyer.



Vote:

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

Motion carried.

3. Correspondence

None

III. Remarks of Visitors

Mayor Richards shared that since there is a very large crowd here present and we want to hear from as many people who want to speak as possible. In order to make sure that we hear from as many people as we call, I will ask for a motion to reduce the time for speakers from 5 minutes to 3 minutes.

There was no motion.

1. Dan Moore – Concerns on decisions; Festus is not for sale.
2. Mary Fakes – Spoke of 1st and 14th amendment rights.
3. James Chris Gerding – Thanked the Council for their hard work.
4. Andrew Shelley – Stated that Council should be embarrassed of themselves.
5. Austin Jackson – Spoke of jobs and infrastructure a data center would bring.
6. Kirk Hilzinger – Advised continuing research and studies on impacts of a data center.
7. Alexander Bischoff – Thanked Council; made suggestions on cooling, JCPA and tenant.
8. Cody Vogel – Stated that opportunities to work leave when cities stop growing.
9. Hunter Williams – Thanked Council for dedications and commitment; positive impact.
10. Austin Williams – Spoke of affordability, growing tax base and affordability.
11. Oscar Harrell – Thanked Mayor and Council for bigger venue; expand buyout.
12. Joseph Hunt – Shared that opportunities like this do not come around often; no brainer.
13. Lori Merriman – Stated no seat at table with MarksNelson; won't see farm animals.
14. Mary Youmans – Shame on Council; masses will forget with breadsticks; recall petition.
15. John Youmans – Shared timeline of events during process.
16. Erica Carter – Spoke of the industrial monster and is 8 houses from buyout.



17. Gwen Mercer – Spoke of ethylene glycol and lack of protections, ineffective council.
18. Michael Cheli - Shared information is biased; need to meet with others for opinion.
19. Joe Maddock – Issues with public trust and transparency; made comparison to Arnold.
20. Sherman Doyle – Spoke of residents engaging and discrepancies with council.
21. Travis Layton – Support residents; doesn't understand agreement.
22. Clarissa Eaton – Concerned with secrets and selfish decisions.
23. Vaughn Hogan – Opposed to poor and irresponsible decisions; not transparent.
24. Andrew John Smreker – Spoke of grandfather with PPG; vote down or moratorium.
25. Zachary Murray – Stated council violated Sunshine Law, fraud and abuse of power.
26. Christopher Reineck – Concerned about utilities and irresponsibility.
27. Tim Brinker – Shared strong support; development attracts investments and jobs.
28. Sarah Doenges – Thanked council for larger venue; requested Q&A forum.
29. Cheryl Hagerty – Spoke of vague answers; concerned of health and economic health.
30. Matthew Drinen – Stated the agreement does not meet requirements, no due diligence.
31. Jessie Shepherd – Shared the Council violated Sunshine Law multiple times.
32. MacKenzie Merriman – Stated that Council has lied; shared cancer and wildlife concerns.
33. Rozilyn Daniels – Embarrassed to be resident; has not been contacted for buyout.
34. Keith Ketcherside – Asked not to limit for future; need measurable metrics and penalties.
35. Tracy Vittoe – Asked if more data centers are planned or if farm will be affected.
36. Mary Buckalew – Concerned of retirement plan with buyout; councilmen sold out.
37. Kyle McKenna - Shared this is unprecedented deal; encouraged electrical apprenticeship.
38. William Wolf – Stated rights come from God, not the government.
39. Gabe Cotton – Against data center; industrial monster will drop house values.
40. Rick Belleville – Shared data center sounds are comparable to jets and aircraft.
41. Sharon Valish – Included in buyout area and now retirement is gone.
42. Leslie Hanson – Applaud council bravery; pros outweigh the cons.
43. Kim Richardson – Cancer survivor and asthma sufferer, need to keep vulnerable safe.
44. Lindsey Holman – Shared that this data center will eliminate jobs; labor wife.
45. Deborah Judge – Stated that data centers will lead to control over travel and currency.
46. Ann Maloney – Spoke of traveling to data centers; knows the councils heart.
47. Nancy Withinton – Shared concerns on health and exposure to nitrogen oxides.
48. Chris Eldridge – Discussed the hypocrites; we are all living in the information era.
49. Lauren Bowman – Live on TikTok; where are the studies to support.
50. Kathleen Logan Smith – Time for lies and deceit is over; unregulated.



51. Tammy Smith – Shared traffic concerns with construction on Gamel Cemetery.
52. Matthew Ramsbottom – Spoke of concern with impacts to nature and bees.
53. Daniel Smedra – Questioned motives and who benefits.
54. Amber Cox – Shared belief of putting residents at risk with air, water soil pollutants.

IV. Bids

None

V. Ordinances and Resolutions

None

VI. New Business

None

VII. Old Business

None

VIII. Mayor and City Council Reports

None

IX. Adjournment

Councilman Boyer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Wehner.

Vote:

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

Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

4/27/2026

Date - Approved by Council

**CITY OF FESTUS
COUNCIL MINUTES
MARCH 23, 2026**



**FESTUS HIGH SCHOOL
501 WESTWIND DR.
FESTUS, MO 63028**


Leah Smith
City Clerk
City of Festus, Missouri