
Community Meeting Notes

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

(These notes were generated by AI from a recording of the meeting and checked by a fallible human for accuracy. If you find an error, please notify us at acteam@alamedaconnects.org)

1) City Leadership & Governance (Mayor Wendi Strom)

- a) New City Manager: Jonathan Cain will start as Lakewood's new city manager on October 12, succeeding Kathy Hodgson, who served the city for 18 years as city manager (beginning as a lifeguard at Morse Park pool). Cain previously worked in leadership for the purchase of the Eldora ski resort and served as assistant/deputy city manager in Idaho Springs, living in Lakewood for 10 years.
- b) The City Council passed an ordinance updating trash hauler licensing to align with a new Colorado state law requiring waste producers to pay for and provide free recycling. Trash providers and HOAs are updating their licensing over the next year to reduce recycling costs and expand services.
- c) Lakewood has five total items on the upcoming local ballot:
 - Charter Amendments: The city charter is being updated for the first time in 20 years (including 2 to 3 amendments). Changes adjust voting timelines to align with mail-in ballot practices and ensure adequate turnaround time for active-duty military personnel ballots.
 - Sales Tax Measure: Approved by the City Council on August 24, this proposed ballot measure would increase the local sales tax by half a penny (\$0.005) per dollar spent. It would fund infrastructure, public safety, and homelessness response (noting homelessness is the most reported resident issue). Groceries remain exempt from the tax. Ballots will mail out around the second week of October.

2) Public Safety (West Metro Fire Chief Jeremy Metz)

- a) West Metro operates 17 fire stations across 110 square miles (stretching from Wheat Ridge to Roxborough) with 425 firefighters and 66 civilian staff. It is a special district primarily funded by property taxes, construction fees/permits, and emergency medical services (receiving no city or county funding).
- b) Accreditations
 - Accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) since 2008.
 - Maintains an ISO Class 1 rating (the highest readiness rating for fire suppression and water supply, which influences homeowner insurance rates).
 - Holds a GFOA certificate for financial transparency.
- c) Rising Costs and Funding Deficit:
 - District expenses have increased 130% over the last 10 years, while revenues have only grown 66%.
 - Fire engine costs doubled from \$720,000 in 2018 to \$1.3 million in 2025, with delivery times stretching to 4–5 years. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and training cost nearly \$50,000 per firefighter.
 - Cardiac monitors for ambulances increased from \$25,000 in 2016 to \$60,000.



Alameda Corridor Business
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- The district is projecting a \$40 million funding shortfall by 2027.
 - d) Property tax revenue has been negatively impacted by state legislative changes following the 2020 repeal of the Gallagher Amendment, despite rising property values.
 - e) Historical context for the need for a tax increase:
 - In 2006, voters approved a property tax increase and a \$43 million bond used to build the training center and rebuild 5 fire stations (which will be fully paid off in 2027, leading to a property tax reduction in 2028).
 - In 2015, after a 2-mil tax increase failed, the district cut equipment and services (which have never been brought back).
 - In 2018, voters passed a measure freezing residential assessment rates, which kept the district financially sustainable until now.
 - f) A 16-member community advisory group (including Alameda Connects Exec. Dir. Tom Quinn) met over three months and found that call volumes have surged 21% over a 7-year period (four times faster than the 5% population growth). They recommended placing a sales tax on the November ballot to diversify funding.
 - g) November Ballot Measure: The West Metro board approved referring a 0.75% (three-quarter cent) sales tax increase to the November ballot.
 - Exclusions: Groceries, prescription medicine, diapers, feminine hygiene products, and auto repair are excluded.
 - Arguments For: Reverses past service cuts, meets emergency medical service demands, helps close the \$40 million deficit, and is paid by all visitors/workers, not just property owners.
 - Arguments Against: Adds to overall living and housing costs, economic uncertainty, regressive impact on lower-income households, and a preference for living within existing budgets.
 - h) The district needs to build 2 to 3 new fire stations, including a designed station at 5th and Wadsworth where property was already purchased.
 - i) West Metro's Fire Muster outreach event is - September 26 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the training center.
- 3) Guest Speaker Amy Atwater with Dinosaur Ridge Museum 16831 W. Alameda Ave.
- a) New Discovery Center exhibit about the unique paleontological history of Colorado and the design constraints of the 1,200 to 1,300-square-foot building.
 - b) Features a 3D-printed Stegosaurus and Ceratosaurus (built at half-scale to fit the space). The exhibit hall doubles as a lecture space accommodating about 40 people. (Note: A specialized Stegosaurus license plate with the slogan "Protect Your Fossils" is available in Colorado).
 - c) Dinosaur Ridge Track Site: Highlights feathered raptor tracks, horseshoe crab tracks (spanning a 400-million-year fossil record), and the world's largest known dinosaur courtship/lekking arena (exhibiting scrape marks left by mating dances).
 - d) A motion-activated, quarter-scale swimming marine reptile suspended from the ceiling, accompanied by fossil fish donated by the Rocky Mountain Dinosaur Resource Center.
 - e) Features a breaking-through Triceratops, a nesting Hadrosaur (duckbill) mother with moving babies highlighting parental care in dinosaurs, and ancient palm frond impressions from Colorado's humid past.
 - f) Details the 66-million-year-old asteroid impact layer at South Table Mountain, ancient giant Sequoias from Florissant Fossil Monument (34 million years ago), early three-toed horses, brontosaurus, and exceptional insect/plant fossils preserved in volcanic ash.



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- g) All exhibits were custom 3D-printed using plant-based plastic TRX Dinosaurs, transported from Arizona, and assembled locally. The exhibit is dedicated to the legacy of paleontologist Dr. Martin Lockley.
 - h) Visitor Information: Admission is \$10 for adults and \$8 for kids. The center is open daily (winter hours apply) and is accessible via the W Line and the West Metro shuttle route running between Memorial Day and Labor Day.
- 4) Alameda Connects & The ACBID (Business Improvement District)
- a) Upcoming Events: Upcoming festival stages sponsored by the Business Improvement District feature Bluegrass and women-led bands.
 - b) Haunted History Tour - Thursday, October 22, in partnership with Heritage Lakewood and Belmar Library.
 - c) Love Lakewood Day- Saturday, September 19, featuring 3-hour volunteer projects, including an Alameda cleanup stretching from Colorado Christian University (CCU) to Sheridan.
- 5) West Metro Chamber
- a) Mini Golf Party: Free community mini golf event on Thursday, September 17, sponsored by Edward Jones representatives Josh Cockett and Andy Kirkoff.
 - b) Jeffco Cup Golf Tournament: Annual golf tournament - Tuesday, September 29, at Fox Hollow Golf Course.
 - c) Perfect Pitch Event: A "Shark Tank"-style nonprofit pitch event planned for November, currently seeking sponsors and impact judges.
- 6) Belmar
- a) Marissa Lowe joined as the new marketing specialist.
 - b) Opening soon in Belmar – 1Up arcade bar (taking over the former bowling pin location), Teso Life (Japanese lifestyle department store), Yoga Box on Teller Street, and Texas de Brazil (occupying the former Bar Louie space).
 - c) Events:
 - Lakewood Food and Wine event (fundraiser for ServiceSource) and the 2nd Saturday Artisan Market on September 12.
 - Temple Fest featuring wiener dog races on September 19.
 - Boo-Fest (Halloween event) on October 24.
 - Holiday tree lighting and ice-skating rink opening on November 20.
- 7) The Action Center
- a) The Action Center is moving into the former Emory Elementary alongside other resource providers as part of the "Daylight Collective," with a target public opening in mid-February.
 - b) September marks Hunger Action Month, with the center encouraging local businesses to host food drives coordinated via their website.
- 8) Lakewood Economic Development
- a) A job fair is - Saturday, October 3, at the Sheraton Denver West. Additional small business programs focusing on accessing capital and scaling operations are available through their website.
- 9) Secure Attachment Initiative
- a) Jasmine represented the Secure Attachment Initiative, a local nonprofit providing mental health services to youth and families.
 - b) Raffle & Fundraiser: A current raffle is running through September 13 to win a trip to Cancun. Proceeds support school partnerships, providing mental health sessions for students with high deductibles or lacking insurance. Tickets can be purchased via QR codes available at the meeting.



Alameda Corridor Business Improvement District

10) Spay Today - Spay Neuter Project

- a) Splash Bash-Friday, September 11, from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the new Old 121 Brewery location (Kipling and Alameda). Water pools for dogs, craft beer, and pet photography by Susie.
- b) 10th Annual Spaghetti and No-Balls Fundraiser-Friday, October 2. This is the primary fundraiser for the Spay Neuter Project, which provides subsidized basic preventative healthcare and vaccines for indigent pet populations.
 - Features a spaghetti buffet dinner, specialty pet cocktails, a flexible dress code, and a special performance by local veterinarian and national comedian Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald.
 - The organization is currently accepting silent auction items and seeking event sponsors. Volunteers are also requested to help distribute posters and postcards.

11) Performance Now Theatre Company

- a) LeDawn Sperling (residential realtor and board member) announced that the musical Gypsy opens on September 11 at the Lakewood Cultural Center and runs for three weeks.
- b) 25th Anniversary Gala: Performance Now is celebrating 25 years at the Cultural Center with its first-ever fundraising gala on November 5. Tickets include \$150 VIP tickets (featuring a pre-reception) and \$50 show-only tickets, highlighting the history of the company's past productions.

12) Meeting Closing & Acknowledgments

- a) Upcoming Ward 3 Meeting: Tuesday, September 29, at 8:00 AM at Sunrise/Sunset.
- b) Acknowledgments: Special thanks were extended to the staff (including Claire for handling technical issues), the West Metro Fire headquarters for hosting the meeting in their headquarters room, and Chick-fil-A for providing deeply discounted food.
- c) Next Meeting: The group will reconvene in October.

Fun Facts We Learned / Historical & Trivia Details

- Kathy Hodson started her career as a lifeguard at the Morse Park pool at 16
- Colorado's state fossil is the Stegosaurus, designated after a class of 4th graders took it to the state legislature in the 1970s/1980s.
- The state Stegosaurus license plate features the slogan "Protect Your Fossils."
- Horses originally evolved in North America, starting with 5 toes, transitioning to 3 toes, and eventually to 1 toe.
- The Western Interior Seaway spanned from the Gulf of Mexico all the way to the Arctic across the middle of the country (leaving rich fossil records in places like Kansas).
- T-Rex teeth were among the first found on South Table Mountain in Colorado.
- Dinosaur Ridge is the highest-visitation park among all Jefferson County Parks and Open Space locations.

Community Calendar

September

- Friday, September 11 | Splash Bash | Dog pool party with craft beer and pet photography.
- Friday, September 11 | Gypsy Opening | Performance Now opens its three-week musical run at the Cultural Center.
- Saturday, September 12 | Lakewood Food and Wine & Artisan Market | Fundraiser for ServiceSource alongside the 2nd Saturday market.



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- Sunday, September 13 | Cancun Raffle Deadline | Secure Attachment Initiative raffle deadline supporting school mental health.
- Thursday, September 17 | Mini Golf Party | Free community family-friendly mini golf event.
- Saturday, September 19 | Love Lakewood Day | Three-hour community volunteer projects, including an Alameda cleanup.
- Saturday, September 19 | Bark Fest | Festival featuring hilarious and popular wiener dog races.
- Saturday, September 26 | West Metro Fire Muster | Annual family safety outreach event at the training center.
- Tuesday, September 29 | Jeffco Cup Golf Tournament | Annual golf tournament hosted at Fox Hollow Golf Course.
- Tuesday, September 29 | Board Meeting | Morning board meeting at 8:00 AM at Sunrise/Sunset.

October

- Thursday, October 1 | Small Business Job Fair | Job fair event hosted at the Sheraton Denver West.
- Friday, October 2 | Spaghetti and No-Balls Fundraiser | Spay Neuter Project's 10th annual dinner with Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald.
- Monday, October 12 | New City Manager Starts | Jonathan Kate officially assumes the role of Lakewood City Manager.
- Thursday, October 22 | Haunted History Tour | Spooky historical tour hosted with Heritage Lakewood and the library.
- Saturday, October 24 | Boo Bash | Family-friendly Halloween celebration event.
- Thursday, November 5 | Performance Now 25th Anniversary Gala | First-ever fundraising gala celebrating two decades of local theater.
- Friday, November 20 | Belmar Holiday Tree Lighting | Annual tree lighting ceremony and opening of the ice rink.