

Oct. 27, 2026

A Full-Circle Home for Ted Welch's Aviation Art

Four original aviation paintings by acclaimed McAlester artist Edward L. "Ted" Welch have found a fitting home at McAlester Regional Airport, bringing together two defining chapters of the artist's life — aviation and the arts.

The McAlester City Council voted Tuesday, Oct. 27, to formally accept the donated artwork and authorize Mayor Justin Few to sign a Charitable Gift Agreement and Acceptance Acknowledgment. The four original paintings have a combined estimated value of $3,200.

The paintings, depicting vintage aircraft, were delivered to McAlester Regional Airport on June 2, 2026, and are intended for permanent display in the airport terminal.

For Welch, the connection between aviation and art is more than a shared subject. Before becoming a prominent figure in McAlester's arts community, he spent 12 years working as an aerospace draftsman and illustrator, blending technical expertise with artistic expression.

Originally from Hughes Springs, Texas, Welch attended Kilgore College and Oklahoma State University. He later worked at Kiamichi Technology Center in McAlester until 1999 and became a dedicated advocate for expanding access to arts and cultural opportunities throughout southeastern Oklahoma.

His contributions to Oklahoma's cultural landscape were recognized with a Governor's Arts Award in 2008. His artwork has also been displayed at the Oklahoma State Capitol and is represented in collections across the country.

The donation reflects Welch's desire to make his artwork a lasting part of the McAlester community. Under the approved agreement, the paintings will become part of the City's permanent inventory and are intended to remain on display at the airport terminal.

If the artwork is ever removed from the City's inventory and assets, the agreement provides for its transfer to the Pittsburg County Genealogical and Historical Society.

Upcoming events

Oct. 29
Touch A Truck
— 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
— 1016 E. South Ave.

Oct. 29
Trunk or Treat: Party at the Expo!
— 5-8 p.m.
— Southeast Expo

Oct. 29
Movies in the Park 2: The Comeback - Showing Monster House
— 6:30-8 p.m.
— Southeast Expo

Oct. 31
Pittsburg County Farmers Market 3rd Annual Trunk or Treat
— 4-6 p.m.
— Farmers Market

Oct. 31
Citywide trick-or-treating
— 6-9 p.m.
— McAlester

Check out more events at travelmcalester.com!

Council Report details elements in the latest McAlester City Council meeting as part of the city's efforts to broaden communication with the public. City council meetings are open to the public, with agendas, minutes, packets and more information available at www.cityofmcalester.com and www.mcalesterok.portal.civicclerk.com. Action reported in these updates is tentative until the Council approves the meeting minutes at the next meeting.

More info

Anyone can view the full agenda, the agenda packet, or the livestream of each meeting online in our new portal through CivicPlus. Check it out at https://mcalesterok.portal.civicclerk.com/.

Actions reported here are tentative until the council approves the meeting minutes.

Did you know...

Citizens can sign up to receive alerts from the City of McAlester and to submit service requests to the City.

The City's app, McAlester Connect, is available in the app store for citizens to receive notifications, submit service requests, and more.

Anyone can download the app by searching for "McAlester Connect" in your app store on your phone.

Then create an account to start submitting requests for City services and to stay updated on everything going on in the City of McAlester.

Consent agenda

Council members voted on the following under the consent agenda:

- Approval of minutes from the Oct. 13, 2026, special meeting;
- Approval of claims for Oct. 7-20, 2026;
- Concur with the Mayor's appointment of Bill Burns to the McAlester Board of Adjustment, for a term to expire March 31, 2028;
- Indefinitely postpone Tort Claim No. 219441-1, filed by the City of McAlester;
- Indefinitely postpone Tort Claim No. 219270-1-AW, filed by Robert Figueroa;
- Accept and place on file Keep McAlester Beautiful's (KMB) FY 26/27 1st. Quarter Report.

More council action

• Councilors heard a presentation about McAlester Public Schools' proposal to construct a $1.5 million safe room at the Karla Brock Early Childhood Center using dedicated sales tax revenue and potentially state Redbud School Grant funding. The project would provide severe weather protection for some of the district's youngest students while adding two classrooms and addressing longstanding playground drainage issues affecting the facility. The proposed addition would connect to existing buildings through an interior hallway, allowing students to access the safe room without going outside. District officials said sufficient funding is expected to be available to complete the project without financing, with construction anticipated to take approximately four to six months. The project would also incorporate bilingual English and Choctaw signage.

• Councilors voted to approve the purchase of $8,255 in firefighting bunker gear from Casco Industries for newly hired McAlester firefighters. The purchase includes two protective coats, two pairs of bunker pants and one pair of leather firefighting boots. City Manager Ken Wimer said the equipment will be funded through the Fire Department's portion of the county's quarter-cent excise tax designated for fire services.

• Councilors voted to approve a $62,708.46 payment to S3 Construction for the first phase of the Sixth Street Reconstruction Project. The payment covers initial construction activities, including mobilization, excavation, pavement removal and traffic control, and represents approximately 6.3% of the project's $999,721.03 contract. City staff reported that construction is progressing well, with crews working to minimize disruptions to nearby businesses and maintain access along Choctaw Avenue. The payment includes a 5% retainage withheld from the contractor's completed work.

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Did you know...

The City of McAlester Senior Center offers a daily lunch program, plus tons of activities each week and month, like bingo, dominoes, bunco, a monthly jamboree, various card games, board games, low-impact senior fitness, and more.

Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. at the J.I. Stipe Center and the suggested donation is $2 per meal. Lunch schedules are posted weekly on the City's Facebook page.

Anyone at least 60 years old is eligible to register, or to be registered by a loved one, by calling 918-715-3442.

More council action

• Councilors heard a presentation from Chief Accountant Kara Coy on the City's financial performance through September 2026, marking the first quarter of the fiscal year. General Fund revenues totaled $4.9 million, or 28% of budget, while expenditures reached $4.5 million, or 25%. The General Fund balance increased by approximately $625,000 to $1.8 million. McAlester Public Works Authority (MPWA) revenues totaled $3.4 million, with expenditures of $1.7 million and a fund balance of $3.5 million. Sales tax collections exceeded year-to-date projections by $297,000, while use tax collections were $218,000 above projections. McAlester also ranked 19th statewide in municipal sales tax collections for September, moving ahead of Ada. Hotel tax collections exceeded projections by $12,000, with all lodging properties current on payments. Coy emphasized the City's improving financial position and ongoing efforts to rebuild reserves, including approximately $600,000 still needed to fully restore the emergency reserve fund. Officials also discussed an anticipated energy-efficiency rebate exceeding $50,000 from Public Service Company of Oklahoma for improvements at the water treatment plant.

• Councilors voted to approve an amended ordinance prohibiting hunting within McAlester city limits while continuing to allow recreational archery and target practice. The council first rejected a broader proposal that would have prohibited the discharge of bows and other dangerous weapons, following concerns about restricting backyard archery and youth shooting sports programs. The approved amendment prohibits hunting or pursuing game by any means within city limits, with an exception for animal control officers or individuals contracted by the City for wildlife management. The discussion followed concerns from Kincaid Hills residents about bow hunting near residential properties and potential public safety risks. Council also approved an item declaring an emergency to make this take effect immediately.

• Councilors voted to approve an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of wild animals within McAlester city limits as part of ongoing efforts to address concerns about the local deer population. The ordinance includes exceptions for City employees or authorized agents performing official duties, naturally growing vegetation, gardens, mulch piles and unmodified commercial bird feeders. Council members discussed how supplemental feeding can contribute to deer overpopulation and disrupt natural foraging habits, noting that the prohibition is a recommended step toward managing the population. The ordinance was approved, but a separate vote to declare an emergency failed, meaning it will not take effect immediately.

• Councilors voted to approve an $821.09 payment to Egis USA Inc., formerly H.W. Lochner Inc., for engineering services associated with the taxiway rehabilitation and airport lighting project at McAlester Regional Airport. The invoice covers professional services performed from Aug. 22 through Sept. 25, 2026. Economic Development Director Billy Sumner explained that the company's name change does not represent a new engineering contract. The project is progressing toward its final flight check and closeout procedures.

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Did you know...

You can register your storm shelter with McAlester/Pittsburg County Emergency Management to help first responders locate you in case of severe weather or a tornado.

By registering your shelter, you're giving emergency personnel the exact location of your safe space so they can check on you and your loved ones if a disaster strikes.

Registration is free and only takes a few minutes. For more info, contact the Emergency Management office at 918-423-5655 or emergencymanagement@pittsburgcountyem.org.

More council action

• Councilors voted to approve the dissolution of the Pittsburg County Regional Expo Authority, in conjunction with Pittsburg County, and authorized City Manager Ken Wimer to dismiss outstanding stormwater fees associated with the authority's property. The authority, originally established as a joint partnership between the City and County, was determined to no longer serve a necessary purpose. Upon dissolution, the property will be divided equally, with the City receiving the eastern portion containing the softball complex and archery range. City officials explained that the County would become responsible for stormwater fees on its portion of the property unless an exemption is granted.

• Councilors heard a presentation from City Manager Ken Wimer regarding his formal disclosure of a potential conflict of interest involving Rooted & Renewed Outreach, Inc., a developing nonprofit organization founded and led by his spouse. The organization is seeking to establish a human needs shelter and agricultural green space initiative in the region, which could involve City zoning, permitting, property agreements or grant funding. Wimer announced his immediate recusal from all City discussions, evaluations, negotiations and decisions involving the organization to prevent any appearance of favoritism or impropriety. Responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations on matters involving the nonprofit will instead rest with the Community Development Department and City Attorney's Office. Wimer also requested that his disclosure and recusal letter be filed with the City Clerk as part of the permanent public record.

• Councilors voted to approve a supplement to the real estate purchase contract for Lots 21, 22 and 23 of Townsite Addition No. 2 and authorized the mayor to sign the necessary documents. The property is being purchased from the Lowell W. Cable Trust for $261,250. City Manager Ken Wimer explained that the supplement clarifies that the seller will retain the property's mineral rights. The revised document also corrects the seller's name from Sandy Coleman, who represents the trust, to the trust itself and includes the property's legal description.

Executive session

• Councilors voted to enter executive session pursuant to Title 25, Section 307(C)(11) of the Oklahoma Statutes to discuss matters related to economic development. The council later reconvened in open session, and no action was taken.

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Did you know...

The City of McAlester has several advisory boards and committees made up of everyday residents just like you. From Planning & Zoning to the Tree Board, these volunteer groups help shape important city policies, programs, and long-term plans.

Serving on a board is a great way to get involved, make your voice heard, and play a direct role in improving your community. Appointments are made by the City Council, and applications are accepted year-round.

You can apply by calling City Hall or on the City website under boards and commissions.

Workshop

• City Council reviewed potential infill housing opportunities involving six properties acquired through the June tax resale process. Community Development staff presented a feasibility assessment examining zoning, lot sizes, utility availability and development potential. Five properties were rated highly feasible for development, while one received a moderate rating due to floodplain and setback considerations.

Council discussed options to encourage new housing construction and neighborhood revitalization, including discounted or no-cost property transfers, partnerships with builders and nonprofit housing organizations, and potential permit fee waivers. Members also considered construction deadlines to prevent properties from remaining vacant.

City Attorney John Hammons outlined the need to address property titles before redevelopment, with preliminary costs estimated at $1,000 to $1,500 per property. Staff will research available abstracts, evaluate redevelopment options and return to Council with recommendations. The goal is to begin moving properties toward development by spring 2027, increasing housing availability while reducing ongoing City maintenance costs.

Staff report

• Councilors heard a presentation from Tourism Manager Rebecca Kerns on upcoming events, tourism initiatives and marketing performance.

Kerns highlighted the Oct. 29 Trunk or Treat: Party at the Expo, featuring 45 participating trunks, and McWinter Wonderland, which will include holiday activities in downtown McAlester from Nov. 28 through Dec. 19, along with the fourth annual Festival of Trees and Lights at Arvest Park on Nov. 24.

She also discussed efforts to establish McAlester as an officially recognized film-friendly community, including plans to develop a database of potential filming locations, property owners and local services to attract productions and generate economic opportunities.

Kerns noted that experience gained from a television production filmed in McAlester earlier this year helped prepare local businesses for future opportunities. Tourism marketing also showed significant growth, with Facebook reaching 13,481 followers and generating approximately 985,000 views during the first quarter of the fiscal year.

Travel McAlester website page views increased 51%, sessions increased 128% and users increased 119% compared to the same period in 2025, reflecting growing interest from visitors across Oklahoma and Texas.

City council

The McAlester City Council is comprised of six Council members and Mayor elected by the citizens of the city.

The Council is responsible for setting the goals, policies, and laws (ordinances) of the City, and hires and supervises the City Manager, who acts as CEO of the City in managing the day-to-day operations.

The McAlester City Council meets regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers on the first floor of City Hall at 28 E. Washington Ave., McAlester, OK 74501.

Council meetings are open to the public and available on the City of McAlester's YouTube Channel.

Citizens can check in which ward they reside on the city wards map, check out how to contact a council member, and view meetings dates and information online at www.cityofmcalester.com by clicking on Government tab and then clicking the City Council page.

Council Members



Justin Few
Mayor



Levi Gilmore
1st Ward



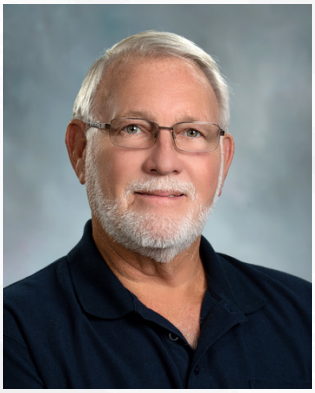
Robin Woodley
2nd Ward



Chris Stone
3rd Ward



Janet Wansick
4th Ward



Billy Jack Boatright
5th Ward



Kevin Beaty
6th Ward
Vice Mayor