

# City of London employees file lawsuit against city council following ordinance approvals

MACEE SWAFFORD  
STAFF WRITER

LONDON – More than 80 City of London employees have filed a lawsuit in Laurel Circuit Court seeking an emergency restraining order to block the enforcement of four recently adopted London City Council ordinances, arguing the measures would result in mass layoffs, pay cuts and severe public safety risks.

The lawsuit, filed Tuesday after the majority of council members overrode mayoral vetoes in a special-called meeting, names the London City Council, the City of London, and individual council members Judd Weaver, Donna Gail Wilson-House, Kelly Smith Greene, Anthony Ortega, Justin Young and James Baker as defendants. The plaintiffs — led by Bobby Day, acting chief of the London Police Department, and other department heads — are being represented by Manchester attorney Jake Roberts and local attorney Emily M. Campbell.

At the center of the suit are Ordinances 2025-13, 2025-14, 2025-15 and 2025-16, which restructure city pay classifications, revise non-elected officer policies, establish police transparency requirements, and adopt a new fiscal year 2025-26 budget.

According to the filing, the ordinances were introduced Dec. 1 and could take effect as early as Jan. 1.

The complaint alleges Ordinance 2025-13 would eliminate approximately 37 city positions and reduce

pay for roughly 30 employees, while also placing new restrictions on employee political activity. Ordinance 2025-16, the budget ordinance, is alleged to condition employee salaries on compliance with council demands and significantly reduce departmental funding.

Plaintiffs argue the ordinances are retaliatory and stem from ongoing political conflict between the mayor and council members following the 2022 mayoral election and subsequent changes in council membership.

The lawsuit outlines a series of resignations and council appointments in 2025 that resulted in half of the six-member council being appointed, rather than elected.

The filing further alleges city employees were subjected to political pressure, threats regarding job security and a hostile work environment — citing a formal complaint submitted to the city’s human resources department in September 2025. That complaint referenced negative impacts on employee mental health and workplace performance.

Significant portions of the lawsuit focus on alleged threats to public safety.

According to an affidavit from London Fire Chief Donnie Hale, the proposed budget cuts would reduce the fire department’s funding from approximately \$1.18 million to \$610,000 — eliminating 11 full-time firefighters and all part-time staff.

Hale stated in the suit that cuts would also eliminate funding for vehicle leases, equip-

ment, information technology, and critical medical supplies, creating what he described as dangerous conditions for both firefighters and the public.

The lawsuit also details impacts to the London Police Department, stating that more than \$778,000 in police salaries would be eliminated, along with 13 positions. According to the filing, some shifts could be reduced to as few as one officer on duty, creating unsafe and legally insufficient staffing levels.

“The ordinances will have a negative impact on the administrative, emergency response and investigative functions of the London Police Department,” Chief Day stated in a press release from Campbell.

The complaint asserts the staffing and budget cuts would eliminate narcotics investigations, internet crimes against children cases, digital forensics capabilities, and participation in federal task forces.

The filing also states the cuts would hinder emergency responses to active shooter situations, natural disasters and incidents along Interstate 75 and Highway 80.

Public Works operations are also cited in the lawsuit. According to an affidavit from Public Works Director Phillip Rawlings, the department could lose between 14 and 22 employees, limiting the city’s ability to respond to severe weather, maintain roads, operate garbage services, and address infrastructure hazards.

Rawlings stated the department was on track to finish the fiscal year approximately

\$850,000 under budget and questioned the financial justification for the cuts.

The plaintiffs argue the harms described in the lawsuit cannot be remedied through monetary damages alone and pose immediate risks to public safety.

They are asking the court to issue an ex parte (a temporary court order requested without first notifying the opposing party) preventing the city from enforcing the ordinances until a full hearing can be held on a temporary injunction.

“London has been my home my entire life,” Campbell said in her release. “The employees of the city are the heartbeat of our community, and they deserve to be treated with the utmost respect.”

Roberts added, “Any employee should be free to engage in protected activity, constitutionally or otherwise, without the fear of retaliation or reprisal. The law should apply equally to everyone, regardless of who you support politically.”

In response to the lawsuit, Mayor Randall Weddle issued a statement addressing the matter.

“Because this matter is currently in litigation, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specific allegations or legal arguments involved. Those issues will be addressed through the proper legal process,” Weddle stated. “That said, I do want to be clear that I deeply value the dedicated employees who serve the City of London every day. Our workforce is the backbone of city services, and their professionalism and commitment to our community do



Photo by Madison Nantz

**Acting Chief of London Police Bobby Day** is the first among 86 plaintiffs listed in a civil lawsuit seeking to prevent enforcement of new ordinances they claim will negatively impact city operations and staffing. | File photo by Madison Nantz

not go unnoticed or unappreciated.

“My responsibility as mayor is to ensure that the City of London operates within the law, treats its employees with respect, and protects the interests of the public as a whole,” Weddle continued. “I remain committed to transparency, fairness, and maintaining a professional workplace as this matter moves forward. Out of respect for the legal process and all parties involved, I will refrain from further comment at this time.”

Mayor Weddle also stated that the ordinances could lead to immediate and widespread layoffs across multiple city departments.

“This week is what’s impacted: IT money across the city, and IT worker(s) lost all funding and taken out of the budget,” stated Weddle. “Next week, Thursday morning, I will have to lay off the whole fire department, whole street department, (and) building inspector.”

Weddle added that beginning Feb. 1, all clerks and the rescue squad could be laid off, and said funding would also be unavailable to pay council members. He also noted that sanitation workers have already taken significant pay cuts and indicated plans to resign, which he said could leave the city without sanitation services as early as next week.

Councilman Anthony Ortega also responded on the lawsuit, stating, “Working for the taxpayers of the City of London is a privilege, not an entitlement. City employees receive excellent benefits, including comprehensive medical coverage for their families. If an employee disagrees with how the city is governed or chooses not to uphold its standards, they are free to pursue employment elsewhere. We are public servants, accountable first and foremost to the taxpayers we serve.”

London City Council Attorney Chris Weist issued a statement addressing the lawsuit filed against the city and council members.

“We are aware of the lawsuit. I do not think any of my clients have been served, and we are still analyzing it. We haven’t been given notice of any hearing on the motions,” Weist stated. “I am sure we will have a response — particularly since our cursory review reveals that the claims at issue are frivolous and they have made claims against Council members who have absolute statutory immunity.”

## BURNSIDE

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“We’ve got a bill ready to file this coming (legislative session),” said Lawson. “I’m hoping (the Department of Parks) will issue their RFP (Request for Proposal), but if they don’t we’ve got a bill ready to go. ... I feel like this next year, we’ll see (progress) materialize.”

Lawson feels good about the leadership of new Dream Big

chair Seth Atwell, who was appointed after the resignation this year of Chris Girdler, and said that Atwell is a “big addition to the Dream Big Burnside Board.”

Additionally, Lawson wants to see the completion of the water tank project to double the city’s capacity — with the new tank in place, the cleaning project will be bid out in the spring for the old one and after that the city will be able to use both. Lawson also wants to see pickleball

courts added to Cole Park. He thanked Steve Merrick and Merrick Hardwoods for a donation that will combine with county funding to make that recreational addition to the city’s park facilities.

Other accomplishments this year include securing a fully staffed Burnside Police Department, which received \$28,500 in grants for new equipment; being awarded over \$123,000 in Road Aid funding for blacktopping city streets; streamlining office

accounting procedures to help with auditing efficiency and compliance, as well as a new city hall phone system; and the continued success of Burnside Tourism, with the continuation of the renewed Christmas Island and a fully-free-to-attend Thunder Over Burnside for Labor Day, with more selective summer season festivities and fireworks viewed by thousands of people.

This week, Burnside held its annual employee dinner at which it gave out a number

of awards, including a Lifetime Achievement honor to Jim Brooks, who has served as the city’s mayor, fire chief, a city council and city judge among his many roles; a Citizens Award to businessman Frank Jackson; the Mayor’s Award to Burnside Elementary Principal April Mounce; an Achievement Award to Police Chief Mike Hill; Awards of Appreciation to Tourism Director Jerrica Flynn and assistant Dee Duval for the city’s Christmas Parade float,

and to Diana Lowery-Pulliam for her dedication to the city’s Tourism Board; the Supervisor Award to City Clerk Cree Dautrich; and Employee of the Year to Joey Murphy, water plant operator, for his more than 26 years of service to the City of Burnside.

Lawson also showed appreciation to former tourism directors Farrah Dobbs and Frank Crabtree Jr., and for longtime tourism board chair Phyllis Coffey, and well as former assistant clerk Janie Ison.



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