

ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 18, 2025

6:00 PM Business Meeting

Council Present: Mayor Graham, Councilors Knauer, Dahle, Bloom, Kaplan, DuQuenne, and Hansen.

Council Absent: None

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Doug McGeary	Acting City Attorney
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Mark Shay	Deputy Chief – Fire Marshal
Marianne Berry	Finance Director
Molly Taylor	Human Resources Director
Scott Fleury	Public Works Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

- a. Land Acknowledgement**

Councilor Hansen read the land acknowledgement.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilor Kaplan led the pledge of allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

IV. MAYOR'S/ CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Sviatohirs'k Aid Project is having a fundraising benefit on March 30th from 2-4 PM included in the events section of the City's website.

- a. A Proclamation in Honor of Cesar Chavez – Mayor Graham read the proclamation.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Minutes of February 19, 2024 – Study Session Meeting
- b. Minutes of March 1, 2025 – Retreat
- c. Minutes of March 3, 2025 – Study Session Meeting
- d. Minutes of March 4, 2025 – Business Meeting

Kaplan requested the following amendment for the Minutes of the March 3 Study Session: Under the FEMA PDM Grant update, 4th bullet point, change to break into two sentences to more accurately reflect what the Fire Marshall said.

Motion made to approve the minutes as amended and stated.

Motion: Bloom Second: Knauer

Roll Call Vote: Councilor Knauer, Dahle, Bloom, DuQuenne, Kaplan, and Hansen. YES. Motion passed

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Social Equity & Racial Justice Advisory Committee Appointment

Motion made to accept the consent agenda.

Motion: DuQuenne Second: Dahle

Roll Call Vote: Councilor Knauer, Dahle, Bloom, DuQuenne, Kaplan, and Hansen. YES. Motion passed.

VII. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

a. Second Quarter FY2025 Financial Results and Update

Berry provided a presentation (presentation attached).

Discussion regarding water fund balance – the strategy in anticipation of the water treatment plant project is to utilize the water fund as much as possible before drawing down debt.

VIII. PUBLIC FORUM –

Citizens spoke about concerns related to limited storage at the Dusk to Dawn Lawn and their experience sleeping at that site – increased storage would be helpful for winter bedding.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING

a. *First reading of ordinance 3257, update to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation*

Shay provided a presentation (see attached). Proposed changes include a definition correction, updates to the summer season and 'responsibility of owner' dates, and the Notice to Abate section which will change from Recorder to Code Compliance Officer and allow the Fire Chief or authorized designee to file for a lien with the City Recorder and Finance Department rather than the Council. Appeals shall be filed with the municipal court no more than 10 days following the placement of said lien in accordance with AMC 2.30.

Discussion:

- Resources for information on becoming code compliant and reducing wildfire risk include the City's Fire Department website, direct call to Fire staff, and the City's upcoming risk reduction event series. The weed abatement officer is housed in the fire department while the code compliance officer works with community development.

Public Hearing open

No comments

Public Hearing closed

Decision:

Motion made to approve the first reading of ordinance 3257, an amendment to AMC 9.04 weeds and noxious vegetation and proceed with a second reading of the ordinance

Motion: Kaplan **Second:** Bloom

Roll Call Vote: Councilor Dahle, Bloom, DuQuenne, Kaplan, Knauer, and Hansen. YES. Motion passed.

X. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND CONTRACTS

XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. *City Attorney Contract*

Taylor reviewed the steps taken to recruit for the position of City Attorney. Council passed a motion to appoint Johan Pietila on February 18th, and the contract has been negotiated and brought for adoption.

Decision:

Motion made to adopt the City Attorney contract and authorize the Mayor to sign the contract.

Motion: Hansen

Second: Bloom

Roll Call Vote: Councilor Knauer, Bloom, DuQuenne, Dahle, Kaplan, and Hansen: YES. Motion passed.

b. Water Cost of Service Study

Fleury provided a presentation with Josiah Close from HDR Engineering (included in agenda packet).

Discussion:

- The updated rate design includes a more aggressive tier differential for Alternative 2 per Council direction, but implementation of an elevation charge was found to not be feasible.
- An expanded utility Assistance program for both water and electricity will be open to all low-income residents by removing the senior eligibility requirement. The program is planned to roll out in July and will be based on a proxy for eligibility and require a conservation assessment.
- The purpose of the study was to provide sufficient revenue to operate and maintain the City's infrastructure using generally accepted methodologies tailored to the City's system.
- Capital Improvement plan includes strategic utilization of reserves to delay drawing down debt with close monitoring of cash flow while transitioning water rates over that same period.
- The WIFIA loan application is in process with EPA. The City's bond counsel, and financial advisors expect loan finalization in June. The WIFIA loan interest rate will be set at signing, but it can be amended up until the City takes the first draw which is why the strategy includes delaying first draw while monitoring interest rates for best possible rate.
- Actively working on BIL-EC grant funding (City is listed for allocation, but funding is tentative) and a FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure community grant (could take 12-18 months). Contingency options were discussed in the event these grants do not come through.
- Rate design with two alternatives was explained and compared to status quo (no rate change). Meter and customer charges were discussed for how they capture costs in line with the revenue requirement of the rate design proportionally across customer classes.
- The council discussed expanding the shoulder season and how tiers might best incentivize conservation. The rate design will be revised every two years as part of an ongoing process of evaluation and adjustment.
- The City's water rates have not increased in the past six years despite inflation. Large ending fund balances are allocated for projects already in the water master plan. Council discussed alternative revenue sources, such as the Food and Beverage Tax, to buffer the sticker shock of proposed rate increase.
- The general agreement of Council is for Alternative 2 with a deeper look into expanding the shoulder seasons, more differential between tiers, and phasing in rate increases over time.
- The rate design will be updated every two years as part of an ongoing process of evaluation and adjustment.
- The Council discussed the potential future water revenue from wholesale sales to Talent and Phoenix, noting that these revenues would be restricted to covering the costs associated with the Talent-Ashland-Phoenix (TAP) intertie.

Decision:

Motion made to direct staff to investigate all reasonable permutations with respect to water rates and return with the best four options to present to the council with brief reasonings for discarded options to be brought to the April 15 meeting. All permutations to be based around Alternative 2 and specific parameters include: adjusting shoulder seasons, rate tiers, utility discounts and phase-in options.

Motion: Dahle

Second: Bloom

Roll Call Vote: Councilor Knauer, Bloom, DuQuenne, Dahle, Kaplan, and Hansen: YES. Motion passed.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. CITY MANAGER REPORT

Cotta spoke that Citizen Alerts are now called Jackson Alerts as the local emergency alert system – it is the same system with a new name, and all residents are encouraged to sign up. Four Wildfire Educational Events are planned for April 21, May 4, May 14, July 16 – information and registration can be found at : <https://ashlandoregon.gov/betterpreparedseries>.

Cotta spoke that the budget season was underway – future Council discussions will need to include a review of fees such as public safety and wildfire, the lack of a Parks fee and/or possible service-level reductions to maintain a balanced budget. Dahle and Bloom suggested a review of fee descriptions as listed on residents' utility bills to provide better information on what those fees go towards. Cotta and Graham suggested residents ensure they are signed up for Emergency Alerts – steps can be found here: <https://ashlandoregon.gov/966/Alerts---Sign-up-today>

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS/REPORTS FROM COUNCIL LIAISONS

XV. ADJOURNMENT

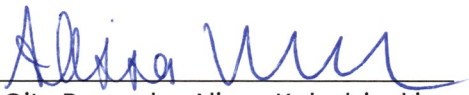
Motion made to adjourn.

Motion: Bloom

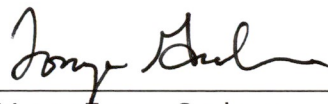
Second: DuQuenne

All Ayes. Motion passed.

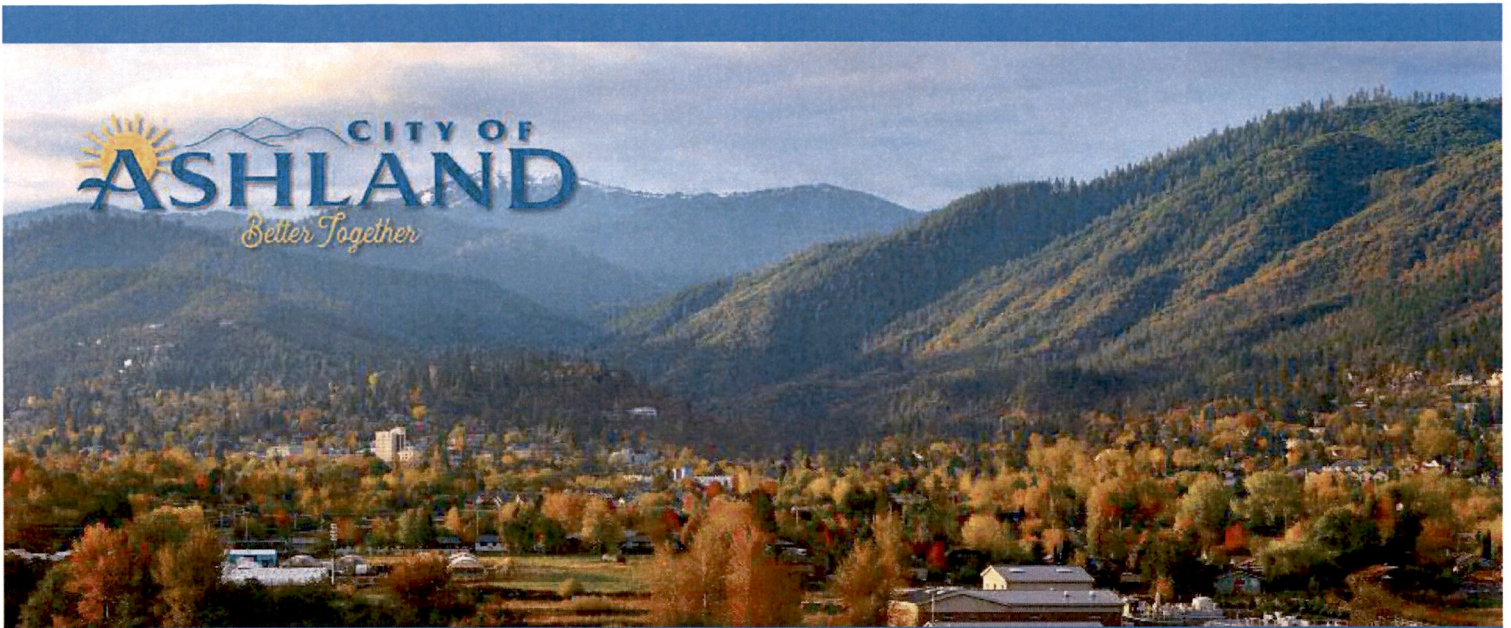
The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.



City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski



Mayor Tonya Graham



Finance Update Second Quarter FY25

March 18, 2025

Revenues

Second quarter revenues:

- ❖ Property Taxes collected to date = \$12.7M
- ❖ Transient Lodging, Food & Beverage Taxes = \$1.8M
 - *TLT and F&B are collected and report in quarterly arrears until the end of the year*
- ❖ Investment income = \$2.1M
- ❖ All other revenues are tracking as expected

Finance





Revenues & Expenditures

- ❖ Accounting adjustments were made in October to properly dissolve funds: Parks General, Parks Equipment and Health Benefits Funds into General Fund (see Resolution 2024-25)
- ❖ Expenditures in budgetary compliance at December 2024
- ❖ Capital spending & debt service
 - WIFIA loan close anticipated for Spring
 - RESP loan update

Financial Overview – Second Quarter FY25

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RESOLUTION NO. 2024-25

A RESOLUTION TO CLOSE OUT FUNDS CONSIDERED UNNECESSARY AND TRANSFER REMAINING BALANCES TO THE GENERAL FUND

RECITALS:

WHEREAS, the Parks General Fund, the Parks Equipment Fund, and the Health Benefits Fund were created for a particular purpose and are now considered unnecessary; and

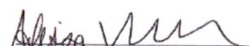
WHEREAS Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 294.353 dictates the elimination of an unnecessary fund and the disposition of any balance remaining in the fund.

THE CITY OF ASHLAND HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

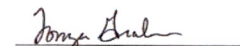
SECTION 1. The remaining balances of the funds, as show below, will be transferred to the General Fund per ORS 294.353.

	Additional appropriations:	
	Appropriation	Resource
General Fund		
Operating Transfers In		631,966
Operating Transfers In		473,008
Operating Transfers In		2,225,545
	\$ -	\$ 3,331,118
Parks General Fund		
Transfer Out	631,966	
	\$ 631,966	\$ -
Parks Equipment Fund		
Transfer Out	473,008	
	\$ 473,008	\$ -
Health Benefits Fund		
Transfer Out	2,225,545	
	\$ 2,225,545	\$ -
Total	\$ 3,331,118	\$ 3,331,118

This resolution was duly PASSED and ADOPTED this 17th day of September 2024 and takes effect upon signing by the Mayor.


Anissa Kolodzinski, City Recorder

SIGNED and APPROVED this 17th day of September 2024.


Tonya Graham, Mayor

Reviewed as to form:


Douglas M. McGeary, Acting City Attorney





City's Net Position*

❖ Fund Balance

- City Wide = \$90.8M vs \$86.5M
- General Fund = \$21.6M vs \$22.1M

❖ Cash & Investments

- City Wide = \$84.5M vs \$81.8M
- General Fund = \$21.8M vs \$23.4M

* Current Year vs Previous Year, same period

QUESTIONS?



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Summary

Staff is proposing changes to Ashland Municipal Code 9.04 (An Ordinance Relating to Weeds and Noxious Vegetation). The proposed changes are an effort to align the ordinance with current practices, provide additional time for compliance prior to fire restrictions and correct grammatical errors.



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.005 Definitions

B. Fire Chief: the City of Ashland Fire Chief or ~~his/her~~ their authorized designee.



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.005 Definitions

G. Summer season: between May ~~15~~ 1st and ~~September 30~~ October 15th of any year, or the end of fire season as declared by the Oregon Department of Forestry, whichever is later.



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.020 Responsibility of Owner – Removal of Weeds

The owner of any lot or parcel of land within the limits of the City of Ashland shall cut and/or remove weeds growing thereon, and on adjacent and abutting rights-of-way, between May ~~15th~~ 1st and June ~~15th~~ 1st of each year. It shall be the duty of an owner to continue to cut and remove the weeds throughout the summer season, or any other time of year when deemed a fire, health, or traffic hazard. (Ord. 3159 § 1, amended, 09/18/2018; Ord. 3009, amended, 04/20/2010)



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.040 Notice to Abate - Contents

In case of failure or neglect of any such agent, owner or occupant to cut weeds and grass and shrubbery as herein provided, the ~~City Recorder~~ **Code Compliance Officer** shall cause to be served on such agent, owner, and/or occupant a notice, describing the property with convenient certainty by its legal description or by the street number of the house, requiring such owner or agent and/or occupant to cut said weeds, grass, and shrubbery within ten (10) days from the service thereof, or that the City will require the same to be done, and the cost thereof charged as a lien against said property. (Ord. 3159 § 1, amended, 09/18/2018; Ord. 1141 § 4, amended, 1951)



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.050 Notice to Abate – Service – Removal by City – Lien

....Fire Chief (**or authorized designee**) shall cause the same to be done and shall file with the ~~Council~~ **City Recorder and Finance Department** a verified itemized statement of the expenditure occasioned thereby, and the Recorder shall cause notice to be served upon the owner, agent, or occupant in the manner hereinbefore described, such statement will be considered...



Ordinance 3257

Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Revisions

9.04.050 Notice to Abate – Service – Removal by City – Lien

...determined by the ~~Council~~ **City Recorder** and a lien declared upon the property involved;

Appeals shall be filed with the municipal court no more than 10 days following the placement of said lien, in accordance with AMC 2.30. the time of which meeting shall be specified in the notice, more than ten (10) days from the giving of the same, and the Council shall at such meeting hear any objections to such statement, and by ordinance determine the correctness of the same, and declare such corrected amount a lien upon the property benefitted and instruct the Recorder to enter the same upon the City docket of liens in the same manner and with the same effect that street improvement liens and sewer liens are entered, and said lien shall have the same force and effect as such street improvement and sewer liens, and shall be certified to the county assessor in the same manner.

