

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Monday, March 3, 2025**

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Council Absent: none

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Brandon Goldman	Community Development Director
Ralph Sartain	Fire Chief
Sydney Jenkins	Fire & Life Safety Specialist
Mark Shay	Deputy Fire Chief – Fire Marshal
Marianne Berry	Finance Director
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder

I. Public Input – none

II. ADU Program Update

Goldman presented the topic of the Accessory Dwelling units (ADU) Program

(see agenda packet for the ADU guide and www.ashlandoregon.gov/adu for more information)

- ADU's have a separate entrance with its own kitchen, can be used as full-time rental properties, and are permitted outright within all residential zones with no planning action needed (only a building permit).
- Benefits include increased variety in housing supply and more opportunities for those that work in Ashland to live in Ashland.
- This program would provide free plans and free consultation with the planning department for stand-alone plans (not for custom plans, such as conversion of part of a house).
- Acknowledged Cities of Medford and Eugene as well as local designers and architects Derek Cheryl and Carlos Delgado that provided ready-made plans – additional plans may become available by the State in the future.
- How-to guide outlines steps for success such as considering property zoning and site constraints, budget and financing information, potential implications for increased property taxes and insurance, building permit and inspection processes, fire-wise vegetation requirements for the site, and system development charges (SDC's).
- Existing regulations apply: ADU's are not permitted as travelers' accommodations in single-family zones and require a conditional use permit for use as such in multi-family zones.
- Senate Bill 919 passed in 2023 offers communities to opt-in for a five-year tax abatement for property owners that reside in the unit – City of Ashland has not adopted this abatement. Opting-in would require legislative action by the Council and agreement from 51% of other taxing districts such as the City, Ashland School District, and Jackson County.

- Time reduced by this process is hard to quantify but aimed to save time on the iterative process (back-and-forth) of working with an architect/designer and planning department.
- SDCs are automatically reduced by 50% for units less than 500 square feet and 25% for units 500 – 800 square feet. SDC's for water and sewer are based on habitable floor area, whereas transportation and parks SDC's are based on the number of households (per current SDC methodology) – SDC's are designed to pay for impacts to the relative systems.
- Discussion regarding how this may or may not encourage workforce housing and/or affordable housing stock; and what an incentive program might look like.
- Discussion regarding travel accommodations: allowed on multi-family lots through a conditional use permit
- Council asked staff to look into a potential agreement for restricting traveler's accommodations in exchange for free plans to encourage housing.

III. Fire Update: Single Roles, FEMA Grant and Paid Leave OT Impacts

Special acknowledgment of Chief Sartain at his final Council appearance due to his upcoming retirement. Chief Sartain and Berry provided a presentation (see attached).

- Discussion of increased transportation times due to increased regional hospital load-sharing. Sartain encouraged review of acceptable risk, ultimately set by Council, through comparison with other agencies.
- Single-role is increasingly important as the trend is towards more time in transportation – this role allows the dual-role firefighters to remain available to respond to other events.
- Recent change in billing agency increased revenue recovery by 25%.
- Upcoming changes to the ASP and ASA will have various impacts; efforts to update old rates for Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements are still pending.
- Current estimate is for \$1.6 Million in revenue for the year for single-role program.

Public Comment

Citizen thanked Sartain and Council for single-role program and impact on response time. Encouraged the Council to look further into the available data regarding the rise in calls for service.

- Oregon Paid leave requirements and minimum staffing levels were implemented by the State at the same time resulting in the department being over budget for staffing – there may be a need for a budget supplemental to draw funds from contingency to cover.
- Discussion regarding staffing and budget considerations, Oregon Paid Leave program, the City's paid leave program, and potential changes that will be explored.
- Councilors expressed gratitude for Chief Sartain's work and wished him well in retirement.

FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Update- Fire Marshal Shay gave the update

- Current grant period is set to expire March 31st, 2025 – an extension has been applied for, which if granted would extend the program until April of 2027.
- The department is not currently opening new projects pending grant extension decision.
- The grant has reimbursed \$19.35K for defensible space projects and \$10K for wood shingle replacement in 2025

- Since May of 2024, 56 assessments have been conducted. A total of 173 properties have been mitigated, and 13 roofs have been replaced. The 1100 most at-risk properties originally identified were all contacted initially with plans to re-invite these to participate if extension is granted.
- Council asked staff to bring back total grant funds awarded vs. funds expended so far. If grant is extended, Council would like to bring item back for discussion on implementation.

IV. Revision to AMC 9.04 Weeds and Noxious Vegetation

Shay highlighted the reason for the update and provided an outline of changes (see attached presentation)

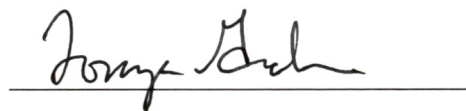
- Clarification that the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Forestry determines the fire season – Changes in dates within the ordinance are intended to match trends of a longer fire season.
- Information regarding Owner responsibility will be sent out in a variety of ways to inform citizens of the ordinance and related expectations for code compliance.
- Plan is to expand staff capacity by utilizing CERT volunteers to push for earlier compliance. The City has no jurisdiction outside City limits – Jackson County does not have a weed ordinance.
- Fire and Life Specialist Jenkins explained the General Fuel Modification Area described in the ordinance is generally the 30 feet surrounding a house or new development.
- Community Wildfire Prevention Plan (CWPP) draft is being developed – these recommendations will inform how the department will coordinate with the Planning department regarding plant lists, etc.
- Conversation about how the City can assist with dead tree removal from the perspective of wildfire risk reduction
- Suggestion to move the Ordinance forward with changes so it is available by fire season and have a larger conversation along with the CWPP about nuisance plants and dead trees to potentially be put under the City's Code compliance section.

V. Adjournment of Study Session

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.



City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski



Mayor Tonya Graham