



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

CITIZEN'S BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Live stream via rvtv.sou.edu. Select RVTV Prime.

I. CALL TO ORDER

1. Land Acknowledgement**

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of Minutes from May 25, 2023 (from last biennium)
2. Approval of Minutes from April 30, 2025 (Mtg #1)

V. PUBLIC FORUM

VI. BUDGET ITEMS

1. Increase Parks Budget with possible motion
2. Increase Budget for Childhood Grants with sample motions
3. Property Tax Levy and Payment of G.O. Bond with sample motion
4. Approval of Proposed/Revised Budget with sample motions

VII. ADJOURNMENT

If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Finance at Finance@ashlandoregon.gov or 541.488.5300 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least two business days before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**** Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work—the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma, and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza.

ASHLAND CITIZENS BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING Minutes
Thursday, May 25, 2023, 3:00 PM–5:00 PM
Council Chambers, 1175 E Main Street

Call to Order: Chair Shane Hunter called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

Roll Call

Present

Councilor Paula Hyatt

Councilor Dylan Bloom

Councilor Gina DuQuenne

Councilor Bob Kaplan

Councilor Eric Hansen (arrived 3:52 pm)

Mayor Tonya Graham

Mike Gardiner

Eric Navickas

Andy Card

Linda Peterson-Adams

Leda Shapiro

David Runkel

Absent: None

Public Hearing

Paul Mozina – Spoke about the increase in Fire Department calls statistics. He would like Chief Sartain to explain the increase in calls. Request that the Committee ask Chief Sartain to produce a report on why there is an increase in calls and put a footnote on the budget which requires a hard look at the increase in the call volume.

Susan Hall – See attached comments.

Ted Hall – Ashland High School baseball team won their first playoff game in years in Portland. The Team from Bend is coming to Ashland tomorrow and would like to spread the word so the community can show their support. North Mountain Park at 5:00 p.m.

Parliamentary Procedure Review – Sabrina Cotta, Deputy City Manager provided a short presentation to review parliamentary procedures. She included how to make, amend and withdraw motions, object to procedure, and end debate.

New Business

Motion to Approve Property Tax Levy

Linda Peterson-Adams/Gardiner Motion/second – I move to approve the property tax levy in the amount of \$4.2865 per \$1,000 of assessed value for fiscal year 2023-2024 and fiscal year 2024-2025 respectively, approve property taxes for the payment of general obligation principal and interest bonded debt in the total of \$210,040 for fiscal year 2023-2024, and \$215,815 for fiscal year 2024-2025.

Discussion – DuQuenne asked the City Manager to explain what it means to levy taxes and what it consists of. Lessard explained that there are two components to the tax rate. First is the permanent tax rate, which is specified under Oregon State law which is \$4.2865, as referenced in

the motion. In addition, there are some general obligation bond payments that have to be made. The tax rate for those two items, which are for fire station #2 for its construction is .0642 per \$1,000 equaling a total tax rate of 4.3507. The permanent tax rate is capped.

Roll Call Vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, DuQuenne, Gardiner, Graham, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Navickas, Peterson-Adams, Runkel, Shapiro, YES. Motion passes.

Peterson-Adams/Gardiner Motion/second - I move to approve the proposed budget for the 2023-2025 biennium as adjusted by staff's revisions and convey it to the City Council for adoption.

Discussion – Peterson-Adams spoke about the balanced budget moves us closer to financial resiliency and sustainability. There are still challenges in funding critical needs, especially deferred maintenance on City facilities. Livability provides a triple bottom line of the economy, environment, and equity. It is here that the city strives to maximize the value to the community of the funds entrusted by the Community to manage and is a balanced budget. The City is continuing in a direction that values partnerships, prioritizes risk reduction, economic development and affordability, and championed by equity. Gardiner spoke about how the City is required to propose a balanced budget for review. For the last biennium, we've worked under a cloud of unfulfilled positions and unmet needs in a lot of areas. Improvements in this budget will fund necessary jobs in our city to create the services we need. Shapiro stated that she does not approve this budget. One of the top priorities that the citizens want is affordable housing. This budget does not address that in any substantial way. Would like to discuss what the budget includes and what it doesn't. DuQuenne stated she would like to make a motion to amend the motion.

DuQuenne/Shapiro Motion/ second- I move that we adopt this budget upon the closing of Oak Knoll golf course.

Discussion – DuQuenne spoke that it is her understanding that this budget was based on the townhall and the survey and the results from those show our constituents and the residents of Ashland have requested that the golf course be closed. She believes that Ashland is in need of workforce housing. This property is in city limits and lends itself to that. DuQuenne believes we can all work and play together. Shapiro spoke about how she looked at the numbers of the golf course. She researched the numbers and is struck by the loss of revenue each year. The City could do more to utilize that property. Gardiner stated that closing the golf course is under the purview of the Ashland Park and Recreation Commission. There's incoming revenue that the naysayers overlook and the expense of maintaining 80 acres of land if there is no revenue would be an issue. If you shut the golf course down, it doesn't mean there isn't long term maintenance on that property. Navickas spoke that the issue of affordable housing is of great concern. Putting parks assets up against the value of attaining affordable housing is disingenuous. The City is already looking at selling surplus properties. Those funds could be earmarked for affordable housing. He doesn't see closing the golf course and putting up housing as a benefit, especially when it comes to irrigation. He supports all park assets and that's what we need to support. Bloom concurs with some of the golf course concerns are. The wording of the amendment is not under the purview of this body. Shapiro agrees they don't have the authority to close the golf course but they can vote

not to fund the golf course. Peterson-Adams called to question. Chair Hunter stated he would like to vote on the amendment. Graham asked the amendment be repeated so they know what they are voting on. DuQuenne agrees with Shapiro that the Budget Committee cannot decide on closing the golf course but can decide on not funding them. Hyatt called point of order. They need to vote on the motion on the floor. DuQuenne withdrew her motion. Hunter agreed.

DuQuenne/Shapiro Motion/ second – I move that we do not fund the \$941,000 to Oak Knoll Golf Course.

Discussion – DuQuenne reiterated that this motion is a result of the outcome from the townhall and survey. Shapiro stated this discussion should have happened months ago. Peterson-Adams called a point of order saying this is a policy discussion. Hunter explained that in the past the budget has been reduced for specific items. Bloom asked if anyone from APRC is here to talk about the implications of closing the golf course. Rachel Dials, Interim Parks Director, spoke about how closing the golf course would be unfortunate for the community. There are already CIP funds budgeted to look at irrigation and the potential for other recreational activities. A RFP just closed to see if a private company could take over the golf course operations. Graham asked that because APRC is the governing body of the parks, to what extent does the APRC have to adjust the spending on? We are talking about a line-item level. But when the budget is appropriated, it is not by line-item level. Cotta spoke that yes, when the budget is appropriated it is up to the department to determine how to spend the funding. Lessard added that the \$941,000 being discussed does not include CIP, employees, PERS etc. It is operational funding only. Staff needs a few minutes to gather information on the other remaining numbers. Navickas asked how much it is to play golf as compared to other regional golf courses. Dials responded it is anywhere from \$5 to \$25 depending. She also reminded the committee that the golf course is also used as a neighborhood park and they are in the middle of rehabbing the greens. Graham spoke about the importance of affordable housing and how to leverage opportunities but closing the golf course is going to create more of a delay than it would help. She does not think it is up to this body to make that decision. The City Council is already having a discussion about housing. Navickas brought up the issue of equity. Providing equitable opportunities for people is what the parks are for. We need to protect these assets. Lessard said the total general fund appropriation for golf is over 1 million dollars plus the CIP funds. This represents three full-time employees along with temporary employees that would be eliminated. There would be not property management funds for the 74 acres going forward. Gardiner spoke about how he is not going to vote for this amended as there is no path for the APRC to manage the land with no funding. **Roll call vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, Gardiner, Graham, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Navickas, Peterson-Adams, NO. DuQuenne, Runkel, Shapiro, YES. Motion fails 10-3.**

Runkel/DuQuenne motion/second – I move to amend the budget by deleting \$133,917 from the personnel services line in the tourist fund budget and then move this money to the material services line in the tourist fund budget increasing that line to \$2,456,593.

Lessard clarified that would eliminate the City's Communication Officer position.

Discussion – Runkel spoke about how we need to spend the money better on campaigns to bring people to Ashland. He indicated that that tourists are not staying as long in Ashland as they used to due to OSFs limited play schedule. The funds would be moved to eliminate the communication to local residents and focus on bringing out-of-town tourists. We need to make a big effort to bring people to town. DuQuenne spoke that now that she understands what Runkel's position is, she is going to withdraw her second to his motion. She agrees we need to support Travel Ashland but not at the expense of a staff position. Shapiro spoke that she sees the need to cut the budget but wants those cuts to go to housing. Motion denied.

Runkel/Navickas motion/second – I move to delete the funds for two additional police officers from the personnel services line of the Police Department budget.

Discussion – Runkel spoke about how in the past the Police Chief spoke of the need for more officers due to more tourists coming to Ashland. As there is a decline in tourism, there is not a need for more officers. We need to cut the budget and this is one way of doing that. Navickas spoke that the issue of homelessness is a serious issue in this community especially with fire season coming up. Instead of putting that money into policing those funds could go to homeless services which could do more to address the problems that we have. The interagency agreement with Talent works well in that when Ashland is understaffed, Talent police officers can fill in. The priorities of providing homeless services is higher. Hyatt clarified that the agreement with Talent is one direction only. Ashland provides patrol officers, training opportunities, and detectives but Talent does not provide Ashland with anything. Police Chief O'Meara stated that Talent does not provide staffing for us, we provide staffing on an as needed basis. Graham wanted to confirm that the motion is to eliminate that figure, not to move the funds elsewhere. Runkel confirmed that is the case.

Navickas/Shapiro motion/second – I amend the previous motion to take the cuts from the police department and move them to unfunded homeless services.

Discussion – Kaplan asked what the number is for two officers. Runkel stated he did not have the exact amount. Chief O'Meara said it was about \$300,000 for two police officers. Card asked the Chief to clarify which officers would be impacted by this decision and what are their roles. O'Meara responded that the goal is to get back to a staffing situation where they would have a school resource officer and be able to staff a supervisor and four officers on each patrol shift. That way if one is sick, on vacation or at a training the minimum staffing would be three officers, that way officers could respond to two critical situations at a time. Currently we can only respond to one critical incident at a time. Bloom pointed out that in the survey 31% of respondents wanted to add those positions and 25% of respondents wanted to add four positions. Shapiro asked while this would save us \$300,000 approximately, would it affect overtime costs? O'Meara responded that it might. The more bare bones the staffing is, the more overtime we are likely to incur. Hyatt asked for clarity on the current motion and the overlying motion. The current motion is asking to shift funds and the other motion's goal is to cut funds and reduce expenses. Hunter stated he would like to vote on the motion to shift the funds from police to houseless resources. **Roll call**

vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, Gardiner, Graham, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Peterson-Adams, DuQuenne, Runkel, Shapiro, NO. Navickas, YES. Motion fails 13-1.

Hunter stated that we are now back to the motion to eliminate funding for two police officers. He asked for any more discussion. Runkel added that the population is not growing. It's been at the same level for the 21 years he has been here. We need to find some way to save money and this is one way to do it. Hyatt spoke about how they were provided a list of items that have not been able to happen due to short staffing levels. That includes no downtown patrol, no assigned traffic enforcement officer, limited detectives, no cadets or park patrol, no job specific training, which puts us in a liability situation, and no fingerprinting. Staff have had to be on extra patrol for longer periods of time, there is less community policing, less getting out of cars and interacting with the public, no area command meetings, no sergeants meetings, less ability to take time off, and fewer officers per shift, resulting in less proactive enforcement. O'Meara confirmed that every item on the list has been a deficiency because of lack of staffing over the last four years. Hansen added that APD has lost a couple officers recently and it seems as though the Police Department is stressed out. O'Meara confirmed that in 2020-2021 four or five seasoned veteran officers not ready for retirement left law enforcement altogether which is highly unusual. Navickas stated he is going to support Runkel's motion because we are using the wrong tool to address a complicated issue of poverty. Expecting the police to manage such a complicated problem is not the correct tool. As a community we need to figure out how to address this issue. Hunter called for a vote for the amendment to remove the funding for two police officers from the budget. **Roll call vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, Gardiner, Graham, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Peterson-Adams, NO. DuQuenne, Runkel Navickas, Shapiro, YES. Motion fails 10-4.**

Runkel/DuQuenne motion/second – I move to delete funds for two of the four additional EMT's in personnel services line of the Fire and Rescue department's budget.

Discussion – Runkel stated that the budget increases the Fire Department by six individuals with the two that were added last week. He does not believe we have the money for this. The Fire Chief wants four additional EMT's and he suggests we get along with two of them. DuQuenne stated she agrees with Runkel in that this is an opportunity for savings. Bloom spoke that we do have the money in the budget. We spoke earlier about having an aging population and suggest people watch the Fire Chief's presentation on missed call volume. He hopes no one in this town calls for help and no one is there for them. Graham asked Lessard if this set of four is the business model around our EMC and Fire Service medical service. Can he explain what happens if we cut it in half? Lessard responded that this business model is for four teams, and we are only hiring for half that amount. We can cut our EMS call volume. There are approximately 950 fire calls and four times as many in EMS calls. When we pull firefighters on to EMS calls, that means they are not available to fight fires. Our service area is much larger than the city. The business model allows us to cap the growth in EMS calls and enables us to keep our firefighters in Ashland available for fire calls. This is a priority for the city because it means that they're better prepared to address fire issues and better prepared to address EMS calls and meet the Council's overall goal of improving emergency services. Hansen stated that this business model is similar to Mercy Flights and although the

projections are fuzzy for the income, it is assured that there's going to be some cost recoup, if not some additional revenue. This is an essential service for Ashland and the additional 65 square miles in Southern Oregon that will have this EMS service. Hyatt stated that the Council already approved this plan to go forward with the goal of keeping our fire fighters in the area. The city's ISO rating is down and the businesses in the area are very concerned that it will impact their ability to get insurance. These EMT's help us do our part with regard to our fire department and take an actional step toward a better ISO score. Hyatt has been that family where no was available when called and you don't want to be that family. Dahle spoke that he understands the Budget Committee wants to look for certain answers to difficult problems but we asked our departments to bring new ideas to try. This model may not work perfectly but he is interested to see if it will work in some form, and you don't cut funding before you even get started. **Roll call vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, Gardiner, Graham, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Peterson-Adams, Navickas, NO. Shapiro, Runkel, DuQuenne, YES. Motion fails 11-3.**

Shapiro spoke about a previous finance director, Allison Chan, who said it was improper to budget a grant until it was received and from what she understands, that is the process that we're currently doing. The Parks Department has an \$8,000,000 grant in its budget with no identifying funding source for the pool. According to Chan's directions, both this grant and the matching expenditure should not be appropriated at this time but be submitted as a supplemental budget item when the funds are received. **Shapiro/Bloom Motion/second - I moved that the \$8 million in the budget not be appropriated at this time and removed from the budget.**

Discussion – Bloom there needs to be much more clarity and APRC needs to come forward with a plan. If you're going to ask for money, have a plan. Graham spoke that the structure of this relationship between the Council and PRC is that the Council is the body that takes on debt, so there isn't a circumstance where APRC would go and be even be able to take on this additional \$8,000,000 without coming back to the Council for approval of the debt issuance. In conversation with APRC there is also a larger community conversation that will come about before the Council will ever see a request for debt issuance. There isn't a reason for us to hold it back when the Council will have the ability to make that choice. Shapiro responded that she understands Graham's point, however from the accounting/financial point of view there is a correct process. We are not to record and grant an instrument of funding that is not already received. Graham asked staff about debt issuance. There are other items in this budget that are assumed we will go out for debt, but we may receive some sort of grant that would then offset some amount of that debt. So what we're seeing here with parks is nothing different than what we see with many of the other capital processes. Sabrina confirmed that is correct. Hyatt spoke that we may have a motion confusion issue. The understanding is from Mr. Lissard and from our Finance Department is that this \$8,000,000 is not a grant. The motion says it's improper to budget a grant until received, but this is not a grant, so the motion doesn't pertain to how this is reflected in this budget. When we vote, we vote on what is in the budget. Shapiro asked staff to look in the budget to see where the \$8 million is as they have talked about it before. It's perfectly feasible when it is received there is supplemental budget adjustment. Dahle clarified that the \$8 million is delineated as potential

debt revenue. Even if we approve this budget as is, that line item in order to actually issue the revenue bond for that debt would need to come back before Council. **Motion withdrawn.**

Runkel/Hyatt Motion/second – I move to encourage Council to consider a charter amendment to abolish the Ashland Municipal court and transfer its functions to the Jackson County Justice Court to handle traffic tickets and municipal code violations. This is because there is just over \$1,000,000 for operations of the Ashland municipal court and projected revenues of \$350,000 and an operating expense of \$650,000.

Discussion: Hyatt spoke that this is an opportunity for the Council to consider this idea which has been suggested previously. Graham spoke that normally she would agree however this Council has priorities such as affordable housing, homelessness, and climate issues that are stacking up on the agenda and she would not be very interested in putting this topic into the mix at this point. Graham thought it is something that Council can take up at an appropriate time in the future but given that the community policing value puts the need to keep our court in, this Community makes me think that it's likely that we would come out the other side of that deciding to keep the court anyway. Shapiro spoke that of all the amendments of cost cutting, this one makes the most sense. It would allow us to come back to the priorities of affordable housing. The budget does need to be cut but think that affordable housing is such a high priority that if we're going to be getting over \$1,000,000 back here that we might consider moving it into the affordable housing budget. Bloom asked if this motion restricted the Council to review this in a certain period of time? Lessard responded that there is no time limit based on the current motion. Gardiner asked if the Council decided to eliminate the courts, is there still a cost to the city to process that function? Lessard responded that he does not believe you can eliminate the total cost of the court. It depends on if the County would take on some of those cases and then Municipal Court would have a reduction of costs. This is an item staff would have to do some research and evaluation and come back to Council with some alternatives. Hyatt reminded everyone that the nature of the request is to consider a charter change. This would be a lengthy discussion and would go before the voters. There will be time and space for significant analysis. Runkel reread the motion, *I encourage the City Council to consider a charter amendment to abolish the Municipal Court and transfer its functions to the Jackson County Justice Court which handles traffic tickets and municipal code violation cases. As the County already does this for Talent, Pheonix, Jacksonville, Central Point, and Shady Cove.* **Roll call vote: Peterson-Adams, Bloom, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, DuQuenne, Shapiro, Runkel, YES. Navickas, Kaplan, Graham, Dahle, Gardiner, Card, NO. Motion passes 8-6.**

Runkel/DuQuenne Motion/second – The future of AFN is on the table and would like to encourage the City Council to move quickly on that and hold off on the \$1.2 million in the capitol line of AFN's budget until some decision is made about the future of AFN.

Discussion – Runkel spoke that if it is going to be discussed as the budget document says he suggests we forward on that quickly and hold off on any major capital expenditures on AFN until that decision is made. Gina spoke that she will support that discussion. They are talking about a large amount of funding and would like to have a deeper discussion regarding AFN. Bloom spoke that his understanding is that Council did discuss this and directed AFN to go forth and conquer

big telecoms. Shapiro agreed with Bloom that it has been discussed many times and the money is there to go ahead. Graham spoke that the discussion that was had by Council is that AFN was to move forward with the pilot process and see how it works. This is a policy decision around the major infrastructural system of this community. And it belongs to the Council and Council has already set that direction. As a reminder that money is coming from the AFN fund balance so even if it is saved, it would not become money available for the general fund. Kaplan agreed this was already discussed at Council but thought the direction was for AFN to come up with a plan. Lessard spoke that the understanding is that AFN would come up with a plan and go forward. Dahle added that even though it has already been discussed by Council he would like further discussion. Lessard responded that staff will come back to the Council with contractual items in order to implement the plan and that would tie to the technical aspects of the plan in terms of equipment, installation, and location. Runkel explained that he brought forward this motion in response to the budget documents which state to assist Council in deciding the future of AFN. Lessard clarified that the language means we are going to do a pilot program so we can determine whether the marketability and the financials underpinning a full rollout would be adequate for the Council to decide to go for the full implementation of the updates to the plan. It will take us two years to do the pilot program and then staff will come back to Council with a final program or recommendation for full implementation of extending fiber throughout the entire city.

Runkel withdrew the motion.

Navickas/Runkel Motion/second - I move that we remove one of the police officers from the budget funding from the fee side of the equation, the public safety support fee.

Discussion- Navickas spoke that the intent is to bring up the public safety support fee that is funded through the fee side. This happened during a time when the business community was upset about the change in atmosphere in downtown and there was an effort to hire five police officers. The Council raised the tax rate and hired a police officer and used the utility fee to hire a second police officer. What we should not be doing in budget is putting operational expenses of the general fund on to people's utility bills. There is an opportunity to remove that fee and not hire one of these police officers and respond to the community who is complaining about excesses fees on the utility bills. Bloom asked staff if the public safety fee could be used for a police officer or firefighter. If this motion passes, a firefighter could be cut instead of a police officer. Shapiro spoke that when the fee first passed it was to hire new police officers. The fee does not go directly to police officers, it simply goes into the general fund. It is not restricted. Those fees do not go anywhere except to the general Fund and then we do the budget, they go to where we tell them to go. Navickas spoke that there is a direct nexus between the two. The cost is for one police officer and is called out on your utility bill as a public safety utility fee. The intent is to remove the fee that is funding the general fund. Lessard spoke that if we eliminate the fee, we will have to cut the budget somewhere. It is a general fund revenue but it's based on emergency services. Is the motion to eliminate a position or the funding because if it's the funding we will have to cut the budget. The amount is \$440,000 that we would have to reduce the budget by. Navickas spoke that the intent is to let future councils know that this is not the way to address our general fund operations by putting this cost into fees. Kaplan spoke that he supports the philosophy behind the motion but is concerned about regressive revenue needs and a per household fee. Fees are not a

preferred way of raising revenue to meet our general fund obligations, and that's one of the reasons why he is enthusiastic about the revenue study. **Roll call vote: Kaplan, Graham, Dahle, Gardiner, Card, Peterson-Adams, Bloom, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, DuQuenne, Shapiro, No. Navickas, Runkel, YES. Motion fails 12-2**

Bloom calls to question the original motion given there is only ten minutes left in the meeting. Peterson-Adams withdraws the original motion. **Hyatt/Bloom Motion/Second – I move to approve the proposed budget as adjusted by staff's revisions and include a review of the Ashland municipal court and convey this recommendation along with the budget to the City Council for adoption.**

Roll call vote: Bloom, Card, Dahle, Gardiner, Graham, Hansen, Hyatt, Hunter, Kaplan, Navickas, Peterson-Adams, YES. DuQuenne, Runkel, Shapiro, NO. Motion passes 11-3

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Ashland Citizens Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 30, 3:00 PM -5:30 PM
Council Chambers, 1175 E Main Street

I. Call to Order

Chair Shane Hunter called the meeting to order at 3:00pm

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Tonya Graham, Counciler Shane Hunter, Counciler Eric Hansen, Linda Peterson Adams, Counciler Gina DuQuenne, Counciler Dylan Bloom, James Fredericks, Counciler Jeff Dahle, Michael Murray, Ariana Spiegler, Meg Wade

Absent: Kristen Roy

III. Call for Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Linda Peterson Adams/ Eric Hansen Motion/Second. I move to nominate Shane Hunter as Chair of the 25-27 Citizens Budget Committee

Roll Call Vote: Wade, Bloom, Adams, DuQuenne, Fredericks, Graham, Hansen, Murray, Dahle, Spiegler YES.
Motion Passes.

Jeff Dahle/James Fredericks Motion/Second. I move to nominate Linda Peterson Adams as Vice Chair.

Roll Call Vote: Spiegler, Dahle, Murray, Hansen, Hunter, Graham, Fredericks, DuQuenne, Bloom, Wade YES.
Motion Passes.

IV. Public Forum

No speakers

V. Budget Presentations

City Manager Sabrina Cotta shared the 2025/2027 Biennial Budget Message. She discussed the increase in cost of labor and a large list of deferred maintenance that will be addressed in the upcoming biennium. The City is not expecting to receive as much grant revenue and has trimmed personnel to ensure the

budget is balanced. Due to the uncertainty around the economic climate, the City has developed a conservative budget.

Finance Director Mariane Berry highlighted changes in the budget book and summarized the Budget Committee's responsibilities.

Ashland Fiber Network Manager Chad Sobotka presented the Ashland Fiber Network's (AFN) budget. The majority of revenue is generated by selling broadband services. Ashland is currently servicing 4,500 households with 6 FTEs. Changes for the biennium include an increased franchise fee, elimination of the IT Director position after consolidating under the Finance Department, and sharing a position with IT. AFN anticipates an increase in revenue due to customer growth. The pilot project update will be presented to the Council on June 2, 2025.

Electric Director Tom McBartlett presented the Electric Department's budget. The purchase of substation reduced costs by around \$150,000 per year during the previous biennium. As outlined in the Department's masterplan, the Department hopes to meet capacity by 2033. The Department completed the Wildfire Mitigation Plan last biennium but will continue to implement and update in the upcoming biennium. It will continue to look for grants for hardening or renewable installations. The Electric Fund budget is \$42.4 million for the biennium.

Public Works Director Scott Fleury and Deputy Public Works Director Mike Morrison presented the Public Works budget. Significant changes include increases in infrastructure and chemical costs. The Department is looking at resolving staffing issues in the Support Division and continues to look for grant opportunities. The Department hopes to complete its master plan and begin an implementation plan that will be presented to Council in the future. Infrastructure is the largest increase in the Street Fund. The biggest project moving forward for the Water Fund is the Water Treatment Plant. There are also a couple of big projects planned for the City's reservoir including dam safety updates and construction and replacement of a bridge above the reservoir and another east of Ashland Creek. The Wastewater Treatment Plant will have some infrastructure expenditures for the replacement of aging components. There is a large capital expense at the City's Airport mostly covered by grants. The City's cemeteries have a trust fund to support capital and operations. Public Works divisions in the General Fund include Support, Facilities, Custodial, Cemetery and now GIS (previously included in IT's budget). Support's spending has been reduced on copiers and materials.

Police Chief Tighe O'Meara presented the Police Department's budget. The Department's FTE has decreased from 39 to 38 FTEs after a records clerk position was eliminated. The org chart is likely going to change due to a recent retirement announcement. The budget is mostly unchanged other than personnel costs. The Department's largest obligation is to Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon. the Department pays about \$550,000 per year for dispatch services. The Department has not fully budgeted for dispatch services in the past, covering the difference with other budgeted line items, so this upcoming budget includes catch-up costs.

Interim Fire Chief Marshall Rasor presented the Fire Department budget. During the prior biennium the Department launched the Single-Role EMS program with 8 FTEs. The Department is introducing a public safety fee and increasing the existing wildfire risk reduction fee in the upcoming biennium. Significant increases are due to the cost of personnel and increases in the cost of software.

VI. Q&A

The City will continue to fully vet the single role EMS program in preparation for the 2027-2029 biennial budget, at which time the city will review the number of employees and how the program is operating.

Concerns were shared about losing federal funding. The City will continue to monitor and search for other funding opportunities. Many of the City's essential services are not reliant on federal funds.

VII. Meeting Adjourned

Meeting Adjourned at 4:44 PM.

Public Testimony: Budget Process -- Early Learning and Childcare

From Paula Hyatt <pmhyatt@gmail.com>

Date Wed 5/7/2025 12:05 PM

To Ashland City Recorder <recorder@ashland.or.us>; City Council <council@ashland.or.us>

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Good afternoon Mayor Graham, Ashland City Council and Citizen Budget Committee Members,

I am writing to express my gratitude to the Council, and the CBC, for supporting our youngest citizens, working families and our local economy by investing in early learning and childcare in our 23/25 biennium. As you look ahead to the next biennium I strongly encourage the continuation of this vital work and ask you to keep the following at the forefront of the decision making process.

1. **Initial SUCCESS** - The 23/25 investment helped support the creation of an additional 40 seats for preschool students in Ashland. Ashland is an early learning and child care desert, increased access is critical. For every one seat, three children need that seat.

2. Ashland continues to struggle with providing toddler care (18 months to 3 years). Currently there are only about 20 full day toddler care seats available in Ashland. There is more work to be done and we have partners willing to work with us to take this next step.

3. About three weeks ago Head Start came within 24 hours of shutting down. Fortunately, frozen funds were released and services continue. Unfortunately, according to major media outlets, the ongoing federal funding is tenuous and may not be renewed in the next federal fiscal year. If this occurs, Ashland will be overwhelmed and access will become even more challenging.

Impacts to the local economy:

1. When families have to go outside of Ashland for care, their dollars go with them. I am confident in this fact as a parent who experienced a program closure with 1 week notice. My child had to go to Medford and subsequently I moved my gym membership closer to my child's school, shopped less at the Ashland Co-op, Ashland Drug, ACE and other Ashland based businesses. We all have busy lives and limited time. Out of necessity, I batched my errands around my child's care hours and spent the dollars on day to day necessities in Medford.

2. The strength of our workforce is directly connected to early learning and childcare availability. Lack of care options means fewer workers for our local businesses.

3. Access to affordable early learning supports local businesses. Lack of care creates churn for employers, decreases institutional knowledge, and increases training and recruitment costs.

4. Access to affordable care is an equity issue. In a report by the Urban Institute, funded by the US Department of Labor, the caretaker who stays home earns 15% less over their lifetime and subsequently experiences adverse impacts to their retirement savings. This most often impacts women, and even more so, women of color.

I truly value your time and effort throughout this budget process and humbly request that early learning and childcare remain a funded priority. Ashland's children, our working families, and our local economy benefit.

With gratitude,
Paula Hyatt

May 7, 2025 Citizens' Budget Committee Meeting – Written Testimony

From John Love <johnlove@mind.net>

Date Tue 5/6/2025 12:55 PM

To Finance <finance@ashland.or.us>

Cc Ashland City Recorder <recorder@ashland.or.us>

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Alissa and Committee members,

I would like to have this message shared with the Citizens' Budget Committee as public testimony for consideration at their May 7 meeting and to be included as part of the public record:

I currently chair the City of Ashland's Ad Hoc Committee on Affordable Childcare and Early Learning. I am writing to support continuing to include \$235,000 in early learning grants in the City Manager's proposed 2025-2027 Biennial Budget.

As you know from City Manager Sabrina Cotta's list of accomplishments, \$235,000 was allocated in 2023-2025, with \$140,000 granted for 2024-2025 to two childcare providers to ease financial burdens for families. The grants benefited 38 children with an average scholarship of \$2,700 per child. One grant also supported enhanced staffing so that a childcare provider would have the staffing resources to better meet the needs of children with behavioral issues.

For almost two years now, I and the other committee members have been carefully studying the issues faced by low-income families who live and/or work in Ashland. These families have real struggles in finding childcare that they can afford, is convenient to their homes or places of employment, and operates during the hours that they need childcare.

We understand the many needs our city's budget must address. However, childcare clearly is vital to the overall economic well-being of the City. Local businesses suffer when their employees can't find childcare. Our families may decide to live and work elsewhere if finding affordable and accessible childcare becomes impossible. I hope the Citizens' Budget Committee will take seriously this need and find ways of providing at least some financial support for our families with young children.

With respect,
John Love, Chair
Ad Hoc Committee on Affordable Childcare and Early Learning

541-941-5571
961 Golden Aspen Pl
Ashland, OR 97520



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

CITIZEN'S BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Live stream via rvtv.sou.edu. Select RVTV Prime.

Date: May 14, 2025

Agenda Item	Increase Parks Budget with possible motion
Department	City Manager's Office
From	Sabrina Cotta, Rocky Houston, Director Ashland Parks & Recreation , Mariane Berry, Finance Director

TIME ESTIMATE

CATEGORY

Resolution - a motion is needed to adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

The Citizens' Budget Committee directed staff to increase the Parks operational budget in the General Fund by approximately \$1.4M.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Administrative/Governance Goal

"To ensure ongoing fiscal ability to provide desired and required services at an acceptable level."

Vision and Values

Community

- Quality of life that underpins the City's economic vibrancy

Organization

- Excellence in governance and city services
- Sustainability through creativity, affordability, and rightsized service delivery
- Quality infrastructure and facilities through timely maintenance and community investment

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As directed, Staff will present to the CBC a revised budget that includes the revenue from a \$5.00 Parks Fee on all electric meters that will be dedicated to the Parks Department's operations.

As reference, please refer to the study session on March 31, 2025, the regular business meeting on April 15th, and the joint meeting between City Council and Ashland Parks and Recreation Committee (APRC) on May 7th for additional background information. In the joint meeting, there was general agreement by the majority to support a \$5.00 Parks fee with a 24-month term starting July 1, 2025. The parks fee charged on all electric meters is intended to specifically fund parks operations in the general fund for the biennium 2025-2027.

FISCAL IMPACTS

A \$5.00 Parks Fee that will be effective January 1st 2026 is estimated to generate \$1,125,000 in the biennium.



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

SUGGESTED ACTIONS, MOTIONS, AND/OR OPTIONS

I move to add \$1,125,000 to the Park Department's operational budget in the General Fund.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

None

If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Finance at Finance@ashlandoregon.gov or 541.488.5300 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least two business days before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

***** Land Acknowledgement***

We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work—the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma, and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza.



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

CITIZEN'S BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Live stream via rvtv.sou.edu. Select RVTV Prime.

Date: May 14, 2025

Agenda Item	Increase Budget for Childhood Grants with sample motions
Department	City Manager's Office
From	Sabrina Cotta, Mariane Berry, Finance Director

TIME ESTIMATE

CATEGORY

Resolution - a motion is needed to adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

In the last meeting, the Citizens' Budget Committee directed staff to return with a proposal to include \$240,000 for Childhood Grants.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Vision and Values

Community

- Quality of life that underpins the City's economic vibrancy

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The CBC has directed staff to include funds in the 2025-27 budget for Childhood Grants and to determine how to re-balance the budget. As background, the specific amount that was paid in BN 2023-2025 was a total of \$235,000, of which \$165,000 was awarded to the YMCA and \$70,000 was awarded to Children's World. Children's World is currently under litigation for a child exploitation case and would not qualify for the City's grant. Staff presents two options - funding for only the YMCA at their current level, or open up the grant process to other childcare providers for the remaining amount in addition to the YMCA funding.

A discussion was had around possibly using the Reserve Fund which is currently \$1.96M. Generally, the intention of the fund is for emergencies such as disaster emergencies and to stabilize the budget, which has been vaguely defined. In the initial budget process for BN 25-27, Finance intended to set a requirement to have the Reserve Fund Policy be set at a minimum of 10% (approximately \$5M), or to start off with, at 5% (\$2.5M) and build to 10% in the next two bienniums, as an added measure to further stabilize the budget *at a substantive level* given current economic conditions and also best practices for governments with Aaa credit rating. However, due to the budget constraints during the 25-27 process, Staff chose to bring the discussion back after additional research can be done on the proper level and how best to dictate the appropriate use of the funds. At this time, Staff maintains that the Reserve Fund is not currently at the level it should be and that the use of the funds should be better defined, and that work will be brought back at a later date - within the next two quarters - for council approval. With that in mind, Staff makes the following proposal for the Committee's consideration:

\$165,000 or \$235,000 Funding for Childcare Grants for Biennium



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

1. \$134,000 from Community Development Social Service Grants. Currently, this has not been earmarked for anything.
2. \$100,000 from Homeless allocation (total \$200,000 for BN)
3. Approximately \$369,000-552,000 from the elimination of either the Communications Officer, Emergency Manager, or Deputy City Manager.
4. Draw from Council budget which is \$281,506 for BN, requiring all Councilors to unanimously agree to voluntarily dedicate stipends towards grant program (\$151,200 for BN).
5. Draw from Reserves.
6. Combination of any of the items above.

FISCAL IMPACTS

BN 25-27 Budget impacts

SUGGESTED ACTIONS, MOTIONS, AND/OR OPTIONS

"I move to add \$XXX to the 2025-27 biennial proposed budget for Childhood Grants and remove funding/appropriation from XXX and XXX."

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

None

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Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

CITIZEN'S BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Live stream via rvtv.sou.edu. Select RVTV Prime.

Date: May 14, 2025

Agenda Item	Property Tax Levy and Payment of G.O. Bond with sample motion
Department	City Manager's Office
From	Sabrina Cotta, Mariane Berry, Finance Director

TIME ESTIMATE

CATEGORY

Resolution - a motion is needed to adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

A motion is needed to set and approve the property tax levy and the payment of general obligation bonds.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

N/A

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inherent in the budget process is setting the tax rate. A motion is needed to approve the rate, which is currently at the capped limit of \$4.2865. Property taxes will go to fund the General Fund and the payment of G.O. principal and interest bonded debt.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Funding for the General Fund and payment of GO debt.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS, MOTIONS, AND/OR OPTIONS

"I move to approve the property tax levy in the amount of \$4.2865 per \$1,000 of assessed value for fiscal year 2025-2026 and fiscal year 2026-2027 respectively, and approve property taxes for the payment of general obligation principal and interest bonded debt in the total amounts of \$213,552 for fiscal year 2025-2026, and \$202,774 for fiscal year 2026-2027.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

None

If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Finance at Finance@ashlandoregon.gov or 541.488.5300 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least two





Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

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Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

CITIZEN'S BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Live stream via rvtv.sou.edu. Select RVTV Prime.

Date: May 14, 2025

Agenda Item	Approval of Proposed/Revised Budget with sample motions
Department	City Manager's Office
From	Sabrina Cotta, Mariane Berry, Finance Director

TIME ESTIMATE

CATEGORY

Resolution - a motion is needed to adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

The Citizens' Budget Committee is authorized to approve the City's Manager's Proposed Budget or Revised Budget. Sample motions are included.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Administrative/Governance Goal

"To ensure ongoing fiscal ability to provide desired and required services at an acceptable level."

Vision and Values

Community

- Quality of life that underpins the City's economic vibrancy

Organization

- Excellence in governance and city services
- Sustainability through creativity, affordability, and rightsized service delivery
- Public safety, including emergency preparedness for climate change risk
- Quality infrastructure and facilities through timely maintenance and community investment

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

N/A

FISCAL IMPACTS

Approval of the Recommended Budget for City Council's Consideration and Adoption

SUGGESTED ACTIONS, MOTIONS, AND/OR OPTIONS

"I move to approve the City of Ashland 2025-27 biennial budget as proposed and recommend the budget to the City Council for adoption."

"I move to approve the City of Ashland 2025-27 biennial budget as revised and recommend the budget to the City Council for adoption."



Budget Committee Meeting Agenda

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

None

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