ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 15, 2025

6:00 PM Business Meeting
Council Present: Mayor Graham, Councilors Knauer, Dahle, DuQuenne, Bloom, Kaplan, and Hansen.
Council Absent: None
Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Doug McGeary	Acting City Attorney
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Linda Reid	Housing Program Manager
Marianne Berry	Finance Director
Brandon Goldman	Community Development Director
Rocky Houston	Parks and Recreation Director

I. CALL TO ORDER
Graham called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.
a. Land Acknowledgement**
Bloom read the land acknowledgement.
II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Knauer led the pledge of allegiance.
III. ROLL CALL
IV. MAYOR'S/ CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENT
- The first event of the Better Prepared Wildfire Preparation series is on 4.21.25 with others planned for 5.4.25, 5.14.25, and 7.16.25
- Free waste drop-off events
- Information is available on the city website about the upcoming budget process
- The order of unfinished business was shifted to address the water cost of service study first.

Knauer was offered the floor and announced his resignation from the City Council effective immediately due to personal family circumstances requiring him to leave Ashland. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and his love for the community. Graham granted Knauer's request and called for a 5-minute recess.
V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
a. Minutes of the March 31, 2025 – Study Session Meeting
b. Minutes of the April 1, 2025 - Business Meeting

Bloom moved to approve the March 31st and April 1st Study Session and Business Meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by DuQuenne.

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

Graham opened the floor for a motion to add an item to the agenda to address the council vacancy.

Dahle moved to add an item to the business meeting agenda per AMC 2.04.0.03 C (to discuss the opening on the council and timing for the process to fill it). The motion was seconded by Bloom.

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

With the new agenda item added, a motion was made regarding the process to fill the vacancy:

Dahle moved that the City of Ashland accept applications for the vacant council position through 5 PM on May 14th, 2025, with council member interviews completed by May 31st, 2025, and appointment to occur at the June 3rd, 2025, council business meeting. The motion was seconded by Bloom.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

c. Budget Transfers and Budget Supplemental

Request was made to pull the item for discussion.

Berry explained that the transfers are to move budget allocations, not actual funds. Expenses have already been incurred for the Community Center and Pioneer Hall, and this is moving the budget to the proper location in the CIP fund.

Regarding insurance funds, Berry explained a legal settlement required payment from the personnel line, which was not originally budgeted. The supplemental is needed to move the budget from materials and services to personnel to comply with budget law.

Dahle moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Bloom.

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

VI. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Appreciation was expressed to outgoing Acting City Attorney Doug McGeary.

VII. PUBLIC FORUM – none

VIII. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Public Hearing on 2025–2026 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Award and Action Plan

Reid presented on the CDBG funding proposals. The City received two applications - one from Maslow Project for case management services and one from Opportunities for Housing, Resources, & Assistance (OHRA) to expand their laundry shower trailer program. The Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee recommended fully funding Maslow Project at $18,000 and awarding the remaining $6,395 to OHRA. The Council discussed funding options for the two applications.

Graham opened the public hearing. Dan Cano from OHRA and Cheyenne Nichols from Maslow Project spoke in support of the funding recommendations.

The public hearing was closed.

Hansen moved to award the competitively available 2025 Community Development Grant funds as follows: $18,000 to Maslow Project Public Service Project, and $6,395 to the OHRA Laundry Shower Program expansion. The motion was seconded by Kaplan.

After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted:

To allocate the fully competitive available 2025 Community Development Block Grant funds in the amount of $24,395 to the Maslow Project public service project.

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

b. Public Hearing and Decision on the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan for use of Community Development Block Grant Funds

Reid presented the 5-year Consolidated Plan for CDBG funds, which assesses community needs related to housing and low/moderate income households. The plan outlines strategic goals for the 5-year period.

Graham opened the public hearing. There were no public comments. The hearing was closed.

Bloom moved to approve the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan for the use of Community Development Block Grant funds as presented, including the minor revisions recommended by the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Kaplan.

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

IX. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND CONTRACTS

a. Second Reading of Ordinance 3259: "An Ordinance Annexing Property and Withdrawing an Annexed Area from Jackson County Fire District No. 5 (300 Clay Street)" and adoption of Findings and Conclusions of Law for Planning Action #PA-T3-2024-00010.

Goldman presented the second reading of the ordinance to annex a 4.8 acre parcel at 300 Clay Street. Council had previously approved the 29-lot subdivision with 37 total dwelling units, including an exception related to affordable housing requirements.

Kaplan moved to approve second reading of ordinance number 3259, an ordinance annexing property and withdrawing an annexed area from the Jackson County Fire District number 5 and approving findings for planning action number PA-T3-2024-00010. The motion was seconded by Dahle.

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

b. Resolutions related to Public Safety, Wildfire and Parks Fees

Cotta presented proposed fee increases for public safety, wildfire protection, and parks. Context for the budget was explained, including a 5% across-the-board cut for all departments and assessment of program priorities and service levels for efficiency. Main general fund pressures include continually increasing personnel costs to meet existing service level expectations. Public Safety and Wildfire fees have not increased since 2018 and 2019 respectively, and food and beverage tax (FBT) cannot go towards Parks operations, only capital improvements and repairs, as a previous ballot measure to allow FBT to go towards Parks operations failed.

For public safety, a $5 fee was proposed to support the ambulance single-roll program. For wildfire, a $7 Wildfire fee was proposed, renamed from the Ashland Forest Resiliency fee. For parks, a new $5 fee was proposed for limited reductions and a $9 fee was discussed to maintain current service levels. Alternatives to each of these fee recommendations were also presented (see packet).

Councilors inquired further about the potential use of Park's FBT allocation and how the terms 'maintenance' and 'development' are defined in this context. An explanation was provided regarding the difference between routine maintenance and repairs as allowed by the FBT, as well as the difference between development of capital improvements and staffing or promotion which is considered programming. The net position of the EMS single role program from the last biennium was discussed. The cost for a fully staffed (eight) single role program was not all realized at once and is around $1.5 million. Discussion on splitting up the Wildfire and Public Safety fees into two separate resolutions.

Graham opened the floor to public comments regarding the public safety and wildfire fees.

Citizen spoke on the recommendation of a public safety fee with concerns that it would be used to subsidize non-emergency ambulance transport instead of allowing staff ability to respond to real emergencies.

Councilor Bloom moved to direct staff to return at the next business meeting with resolution 2025-04 to be divided between the public safety fee and the wildfire protection fee, as well as to specify that the annual escalator shall be based on the CPIU as per policy for the most recent 12-month period available not to exceed 5% annually; that the finance department shall provide public notice of the proposed adjustment at least 30 days before it takes effect along with a brief explanation of the CPI calculation; and that any annual increase above 5% requires separate approval by the City Council via duly noticed public meeting. The motion was seconded by Dahle.

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

Graham opened the floor to public comments regarding the Parks fee.

Many citizens spoke in support of the Parks department, its programs (especially the Nature and Senior centers), and in support of a Parks fee to continue current services. Parks facilities, staff, and programs were referred to as valued community assets and as key to ongoing economic development in the region.

Staff clarified that the budget gap is not due to Park's mismanagement, but rather overall expenses outpacing revenue in the general fund. The $5 fee recommendation would still require the program cuts that were presented, whereas the $9 fee would allow existing programs to continue. Councilors also asked for clarification on the budget gap and how programs were prioritized when reviewed for department cuts. Staff spoke about consolidation of seasonal workers into a single position, council direction given to staff Pioneer Hall and the Community Center and that the budget assessment included comparing costs to revenue for its programs.

Councilor Hansen moved to approve resolution 2025-06 to establish a park fee of $5 per electric meter with nominal annual inflationary escalators and amended it to be a $9 fee per electric meter. The motion was seconded by Kaplan.

Roll Call Vote: Councilors Kaplan and Hansen. YES. Councilors Dahle, Bloom and DuQuenne: NO. Motion failed.

Due to time constraints, the remaining agenda items were moved to the next regularly scheduled Council meeting per AMC 2.04..030 (D)(3).

a. Second Reading ORD 3258 An Ordinance Amending AMC Chapter 10.30 to Prohibit Hazardous Fire Use

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Water Cost of Service Study and Rate Study Final Draft Update
b. 2025-2027 Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) Revenue Use for Tourism Promotion
c. Proposed Changes to Enhanced Law Enforcement Area Process

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. CITY MANAGER REPORT

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

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Alissa Kolodzinski

City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski

Tonya Graham

Mayor Tonya Graham

Budget-Related Fee Discussion

April 15, 2025

Budget

League of Oregon Cities
6d ·

Local governments across Oregon are grappling with budget shortfalls, and the LOC is advocating for a review of the state's property tax laws. Lobbyist Jenna Jones emphasized the need for reform: "Our biggest thing is getting the legislature to help us convene the necessary people to start talking about [this]. What is the new property tax system that replaces the one that we currently have that is actually adequate, that's fair, that's equitable for local governments and for... **See more**

KATU.COM

Facing multi-million-dollar shortfalls, local governments set eyes on OR property tax laws

Better Together

Budget

Overview

- Budget Process
  - Reviewing and reconciling past biennium
  - Budget direction: No increase
  - Estimating Revenues & Expenditures- each department has reduced budget by ~5%
  - Assessing Program Priorities & Service Levels
    - Combining positions & moving where most needed
- Reviewing increasing fees to match service level expectations
  - Public Safety, currently $1.50 per electric meter
  - Wildfire, currently $3.00 per ¾ water meter
  - Parks, currently no fee

Better Together

Budget

Other Jurisdictions

CITY COMPARATIVES		Ashland	Medford	Central Pt.	Talent	Grants Pass
Population		22,086	84,423	19,918	5,228	39,112
Fees	Public Safety	$ 1.50	$ 16.07	$ 2.00	$ 4.00	$ 12.36
	Parks	0.00	5.35	6.00	8.43	0.00
	Wildfire	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		$ 4.50	$ 21.42	$ 8.00	$ 12.43	$ 12.36
Aurhotized FTE						
	Police	39.00	130.70	*31.00*	10.65	57.00
	Fire	47.00	108.20	*0.00*	0.00	31.00
	Parks	37.00	70.00	*7.15*	*4.00*	28.00
		123.00	308.90	38.15	14.65	116.00
Parks Acreage		811	2,227	not available	36	196
Number of Parks		20	37	9	not available	24
Trails		53	not available	not available	not available	not available

Compared to neighboring cities, Ashland trails in cost recovery

Better Together

Main General Fund Revenues*

- Revenue expectation 1-3% for BN 25-27
  - Property Taxes = $13.5M
    - *Capped at 3%*
  - Franchise Fees = $4.0M
    - *Impacted due to no rate increases for utilities*
  - Electric User Tax = $3.6M
    - *On average has only increased less than 1% in the last 5 years*

* Actuals for Fiscal Year 2024

Budget

Better Together

Main General Fund Revenues

- Revenue expectation 1-3% for BN 25-27
  - Transient Lodging Tax = $1.9M
    - *Since 2023, 31% goes to Tourism Fund and remaining in GF*
    - *Since 2019, total tax down 12%*
  - Grant Revenues
    - *Received Covid and state grants last two bienniums to fund operations and unhoused initiatives*
    - *Forecasting large decrease in grant revenues in BN 25-27*

Budget

Better Together

Budget

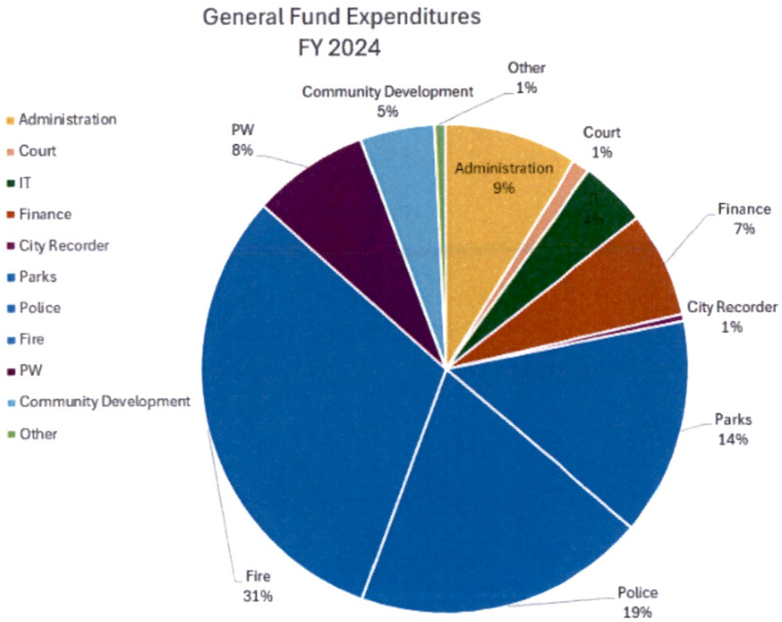
Main General Fund Pressures

- Personnel costs & Service level expectations
  - Personnel most valuable asset and necessary to provide service
    - ~15% increase in personnel costs
  - Service levels
    - Increase in demand for service
      - Ambulance calls
      - Maintenance needs
      - Transient population

Better Together

Budget

General Fund Expenditures



GF personnel costs are 62% of total expenditures

Key expenditures expected to grow by 25% in BN 25-27

Better Together

Budget

Cost Recovery

- **Police & Fire**
  - *Personnel costs for both depts have increased*
  - *Public Safety & AFR Fees have not increased since 2018 & 2019*
  - *While Ambulance revenue covers Single Role EMS and addresses dropped calls, program is an increase of 8 FTE or $1.5M per year. Less revenue is covering fire personnel.*
- **Parks**
  - *Operational costs have increased; prohibition of herbicides increases staffing*
  - *Food & Beverage tax cannot go towards Parks operations, only capital improvement.*

Better Together

Budget

Council Direction: Dedicated Fees for Priority Programs: Public Safety $5 ($60/yr)

- Public Safety $530K annual increase funds:
  - *Transition the Single Role program from a pilot to permanent for four single role positions.*
  - *Continue to vet program & cost benefit ratio given uncertainty on cost recovery*
    - *Goal: Maintain call volume response rate with the single role program*
- No fee increase:
  - *Removal of single role program*

Alternatives:

$3 Fee (36/yr)	$4 Fee ($48/yr)	$6 Fee ($78/yr)
• Unable to maintain single role program • Maintain staffing levels of police & fire minus single role program	• Transition to 4 single role positions from 8	• Full pilot transition to permanent • Need additional time/ information of full 8 team members & cost recovery

Better Together

Budget

Council Direction: Dedicated Fees for Priority Programs: Wildfire (AFR) $7 ($84/yr)

- Wildfire Fee (AFR) $416K annual increase funds:
  - *Dedicated funding for mitigation work (one-time funding used prior for large scale mitigation work)*
  - *Dedicated funding for wildfire personnel & emergency management*
- No fee increase:
  - *Transition from mitigation work to education only work*
  - *Reduction in staffing year 2 of BN*

$4 Fee ($48/yr)	$5 Fee ($60/yr)	$7 Fee ($84/yr)
• Reduction in staffing from 2 FTE to 1 FTE end of BN	• Retain 2 FTE • Education only, minimal mitigation	• Retain 2 FTE & option to increase • Mitigation work & grow fund for additional mitigation work watershed & City

Better Together

Budget

Council Direction: Dedicated Fees for Priority Programs: Parks $5 ($60/yr)

- Parks Fee starts Jan 1st, funds:
  - *Maintain current level of parks maintenance and operations*
  - *Funds staffing for East Main Park*
  - *Full staffing of senior center*
- No fee increase:
  - *Reduction in parks maintenance*
  - *Reduction in senior center services*
  - *East Main Park delayed or does not move forward*
    - *Return grant funds*

Alternatives:

$3 Fee ($36/yr)	$4 Fee (48/yr)	$6 Fee ($72/yr)	$9 Fee($108/yr)
• Maintain current parks maintenance levels • Reduction in senior center services • Reduction in recreation • East Main park does not move forward	• Maintain senior center services current levels • Maintain current parks maintenance levels • Reduction in recreation • East main park does not move forward	• Maintain senior center services current levels • Maintain current parks maintenance levels • Increase in mitigation and maintenance work	• Maintain current parks and rec services

Better Together

Budget

Original Proposed Budget:	**$15,795,925**	**39 staff**
5% Reductions Impacts (Required)	**$15,200,000**	**37 staff**

Item	Impact
Organization Restructure	Consolidation and re-classification of some positions to ensure we meet regulatory requirements and minimize future cuts
Golf grill termination	Review potential outsourcing, will reduce costs and revenues
Recreation Coordinator	• Reduction of (1) FTE, resulting in: o No re-opening of Pioneer Hall & Community Center o Pool – Open Wednesday thru Sunday only o Ice Rink – Weekday closure, reduced hours on Weekends
Seasonal Staff Reductions	• 50% reduction in seasonal staff for park operations • Close 33% restrooms: o Skate Park o Garden Way o Lithia (Cottonwood, 3rd Parking Lot, Bandshell, Swim Area (seasonal closure) • Reduced services to neighborhood and community parks. o Irrigation, mowing reductions o Reduced vegetation management, etc. • Reduction in VIP program related to volunteer work parties. • Reduction in days that Garfield Splashpad can be open. o Weekends and days that are over 90 degrees • Reduction in ability to manage and assist events. o No staff for restroom or trash and/or other services
50% reduction in Environmental Education	Layoff of (1) staff, closure of Nature Center (except for events, classes, etc.) and reduction to programming. Bear Creek Salmon Festival and Bird Day would be eliminated.
Professional services, advertising Reduction	No recreation guides printed or mailed, etc.
Park Fees increases	Sport Fields, Court Fees, use fees increased to offset some general fund usage

Better Together

Budget

10% Reduction (No Parks Fee)

Item	Impact
Elimination of Enviro. Edu. Programs	Reduction of 1 FTE. No programs. Close nature center.
Senior Center Reduction	Reduction of 1 FTE, 2 days of service
Loss of East Main Park	Loss of $1million grant
Pool & Ice Rink Closure	Loss of programming & revenue
Operational Reductions	Fuels and regulatory focus- loss of amenities and programming

Better Together

Budget

Next Steps:

Budget Process

- Operational efficiencies and staffing are still being reviewed as budget process moves forward & will continue throughout next BN

Additional Needs

- Facilities
    - Divestment of property to fund facilities needs
        - City & Parks

Better Together

Better Together

QUESTIONS?