ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Monday, August 4, 2025

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Council Present: Mayor Graham, Councilors Bloom, Dahle, DuQuenne, Hansen, Kaplan, and Sherrell
Council Absent: none
Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Johan Pietila	City Attorney
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Tighe O'Meara	Chief of Police
Molly Taylor	Human Resources Director

I. Call to Order

II. Reports and Presentations

a. **ELEA Ordinance**

O'Meara presented information on proposed changes to the Enhanced Law Enforcement Area (ELEA) ordinance (presentation attached). Proposed changes would not create new ELEAs but would streamline the process for civil exclusions in existing ELEAs. The evolution of the proposed ordinance was outlined, and it was explained it would require 3+ qualifying violations, 2+ non-person crimes, and 1+ person crime, felony, or unauthorized burning before an officer could apply to a judge for an exclusion order.

O'Meara emphasized:

- Officers would provide documentation and literature at every step
- Defendants would be invited to appear alongside officers to present their case
- Necessary variances would be allowed for passage through excluded areas and accessing essential services
- A 10-day appeal period during which the exclusion would be stayed
- Examples of individuals who, if excluded after arrests in 2024, could have prevented 6-10 additional incidents throughout the year.

Councilors asked about the variance process and whether individuals could request new variances if their circumstances changed, such as moving into an ELEA. Pietila confirmed that a judge could offer new variances based on compelling circumstances at any time. Councilors inquired about the appeal process costs and communication between courts and police. O'Meara and Pietila spoke of a no-cost appeal process and robust communication systems between the municipal court and police department. Councilors suggested including language in handout materials stating there is no fee to appeal. Council discussed the basis for the ordinance and if it would address problems or simply move people elsewhere. O'Meara spoke that his department couldn't provide data on where excluded individuals go but maintained that addressing negative behavior in specific geographic areas was valuable.

During public comment, several citizens spoke in opposition of the ordinance with concerns that it contradicts principles of belonging and would damage trust between police and homeless individuals. That the ordinance criminalizes homelessness rather than addressing root cause, and it merely moves people around rather than solving problems. Suggested an ombudsman program for the homeless and better inter-agency coordination

Graham polled Councilors to determine if there is interest in bringing the ordinance forward to a business meeting. Council agreed the ordinance will come forward within the next two business meetings.

b. Ratification of 3- Year Labor Agreements between IBEW Electrical Union Local 659, IBEW Clerical Union Local 659, LiUNA Local 737, and Resolution No 2025-22. Clarifying Certain Employment Conditions for Management, Confidential and Non-Represented Employees

Cotta and Taylor presented information on the labor agreements and non-represented employee resolution coming before the Council for a vote at the next day's business meeting (presentation attached). Taylor provided background on the collective bargaining process and reviewed the timeline of union negotiations.

Taylor noted that staff turnover had decreased from 17% in 2022 to 8% in 2023/24 and was at 9% for the current year through July. Comparative wage data was reviewed showing Ashland's position relative to nearby and similar municipalities, and Jackson County. Taylor clarified that all the agreements provide no COLAs (cost of living adjustment) for 2025. The 2025 wage adjustments are designed to bring employees to mid-market rates based on the compensation and classification study, followed by COLAs in 2026 and 2027. Changes to benefits were outlined including HRA increases, deferred compensation increases, and the inclusion of three personal days and Christmas Eve as a holiday.

The average wage adjustments by group were summarized as:

- Electric: 5% for 2025, 3% for 2026 and 2027
- Laborers: 3.9% for 2025, 2% for 2026 and 2027
- Clerical: 4% for 2025, 2% for 2026 and 2027
- Unrepresented: 5% for 2025, 2% for 2026 and 2027

Cotta addressed how the city would pay for these agreements through funding and cost-saving measures, including:

- Delaying hiring certain positions and eliminating the finance manager position
- Evaluating personnel vacancies before recruitment

- Health care premium savings due to lower than anticipated costs
- Switched from fully funding the Paid Leave Oregon plan to an insured plan
- Reducing the professional services budget in Human Resources
- Clean fuel credit sales (for the electric fund)
- Delaying a generator replacement at the water treatment plan
- Delaying vehicle replacement and capital expenditures
- Possible future rate adjustments for electric, water, and wastewater for future personnel costs

Council discussed concerns about the long-term financial impacts of this decision and requested more comprehensive five-year financial modeling. Council would like to have the unrepresented resolution separated out from the union contracts for voting and considered if they had enough information to make a decision at the next business meeting. Cotta acknowledged the need for long-term planning and spoke of strategies to offset costs including appropriate utility rates, right-sized staffing, fleet evaluation, building fund adjustments, and consideration of contractual services.

During public comment, a resident spoke in support of the compensation adjustments, stating they represented a necessary investment in the city's operational capacity and would help address issues created over a decade without a comprehensive review of the classification and compensation framework.

After further discussion and polling by Graham, Council spoke of having enough information to vote at the next business meeting. Staff was directed to schedule a financial retreat by October 1st (2025) to occur by the end of the calendar year. The retreat will allow council to explore the financial stabilization topics as written in the council communication, and review a two-year, five-year, and long-term financial plan to address financial stability moving forward.

III. Adjournment of Study Session

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Alissa KK

City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski

Tonya Graham

Mayor Tonya Graham

Possible ELEA Process Change

Chief Tighe O'Meara
August 4, 2025

From 2/19/25

Current ord. is based on multiple ***<u>convictions</u>***

- **Examples**
  - <u>Person A</u>: if expelled from CAP E in February of 2024 based on an arrest could have avoided 10 additional actions with throughout the rest of 2024
  - <u>Person B:</u> if expelled from CAP E in January of 2024 after 3 qualifying violations could have avoided 11 additional actions throughout the rest of 2024
  - <u>Person C:</u> if expelled from CAP W in January of 2024 after an arrest could have avoided six additional incidents in 2024

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From 2/19/25

Current ord. is based on multiple ***convictions***

- **Examples**
  - **Person D: if expelled from CAP E in February of 2024 for an arrest could have avoided 10 additional cases in 2024**
  - **Person E: if expelled from CAP W in May 2024 after 3 qualifying violation could have avoided eight additional incidents in 2024 including two assault charges**
  - **Person F: if expelled from CAP E in February of 2024 for an arrest could have avoided eight additional incidents in 2024**
  - **Person G: if expelled from CAP E in April of 2024 for an arrest could have avoided eight additional incidents in 2024**

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1st Request for change

City of Medford Model

Officer based for a single qualifying violation with an appeal to the Judge if wanted

This has been challenged in federal court and upheld

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ELEA Re-visited

Next round of discussions-more restrictive than Medford

3 or more qualifying violations or 1 or more crimes of any severity

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ELEA Re-visited

Current proposal-even yet more restrictive

3 or more qualifying violations
2 or more non-person crimes
1 or more person crime, felony or unauth. burning
Officer's application to the Judge

Would not impact passage thru the area, or visiting a needed service (grocery, DR etc.) Defendant would be provided info throughout the process and given ample time to participate and appeal.

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QUESTIONS?

City Council Review of CBAs & Non-Represented Resolution

8/4/2025

At the 8/5/2025 City Council Business Meeting Council we will be asked to approve three collective bargaining agreements and a Resolution outlining employment conditions for unrepresented employees.

Last Approval on this topic: August 16th, 2022

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager and Mayor to sign the three-year contracts, ratifying the tentative agreements reached in negotiations with the IBEW Technical/ Clerical Union and IBEW Lineman Union as well as repeal and replace Resolution 2021-18 with Resolution 2022-26.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS
I move to approve the three-year labor agreement with the IBEW Clerical/Technical union, the IBEW Electrical Union, and Resolution 2022-26 and repeal and replace Resolution 2021-18 of the same title and authorize the City Manager to sign the three-year agreements.

Timeline of Council Discussion / Action

- August 16, 2022, Council approved prior agreements covering the past three fiscal years FY 2022-FY2025
- Council funded a Compensation and Classification Study during the 23/25 biennial budget process.
- May 6, 2025, Executive Session: To conduct deliberation with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d).
- May 20, 2025, Executive Session: To conduct deliberation with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d).
- May 20, 2025, Compensation and Classification study presented to City Council
- June 17, 2025, Council tabled a decision on the Resolution clarifying certain employment conditions for non-represented employees.

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Collective Bargaining Agreement Process

- Near end of current Collective Bargaining Agreement Term, City receive a letter from union requesting to open negotiations
- Union typically presents contract changes and compensation requests based on union produced comps and requests.
- Over several months City and Union meet to discuss and negotiate terms for updated agreement
- Once a tentative agreement is reached between the City and Union, Union returns to the members to hold a vote to uphold or return to the bargaining table.
- Once Union vote affirmative, Collective bargaining agreement goes to Council for consideration and vote.
- Based on union negotiations updates to the Non-represented Resolution are drafted to ensure pay equity throughout the City.

Background Information:

Year	Turnover Rate
2022	17%
2023	8%
2024	8%
2025 through July	9%

Median Wage for 4-person household	
Jackson County	$103, 083
Ashland, OR	$142,857
Unrepresented Ashland Staff	$92, 706

City of Medford Range-Non-Rep.	City of Ashland Range- Non-Rep
$60,000 - $168,000	$51,000- $136,000
City of Medford Executive Staff	City of Ashland Executive Staff
$148,000- $233,000	$131,000- $208,000

Summary of Average Wage Increases

- 2025- No COLA, NO Raises- wage adjustment to place employees at mid-market range for each respective position per comp and class study
- 2026- COLA 2%
- 2027- COLA 2%

	Average % increase	Average increase per hour	Average Annual $ Difference
2025	5%	$2.87	$5,960.30
2026	3%	$1.78	$3,708.39
2027	3%	$1.59	$3,297.24

IBEW Clerical

	Average % increase	Average increase per hour	Average Annual Difference
2025	4.0%	$1.31	$2,732.89
2026	2.0%	$0.70	$1,424.94
2027	2.0%	$0.72	$1,453.44

	Average % increase	Average increase per hour	Average Annual Difference
2025	3.9%	$1.21	$2,521.48
2026	2.0%	$0.65	$1,359.46
2027	2.0%	$0.67	$1,386.06

Unrepresented

	Average % increase	Average increase per hour	Average Annual Difference
2025	5.0%	$2.18	$4,533.84
2026	2.0%	$0.95	$1,981.87
2027	2.0%	$0.97	$2,021.52

By position detail can be found in the Council packet

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Compensation package comparison last contract period versus current proposal

2022-2025	2025-2028
Total COLAs: 11% (CPI Increase 15.7%)	Total COLAs: 4% plus wage adjustment (Average wage adjust 4.475% for an average total of 8.475%)
HRA VEBA increase: 1%	HRA VEBA increase: 0.5%
Deferred Compensation: No change	Increase of $50 per month
Longevity Pay: 5 - 9 years: $1000 annual 10-14 years: $1250 annual 15+ years: $1500 annual	No change
	Personal days (3)* In recognition of SERJAC recommendation to allow for flexibility around various religious holidays beyond mainstream
	Christmas Eve Holiday
Step Increase: Average of 5%	Step Increase: 3% (uniform across the board)

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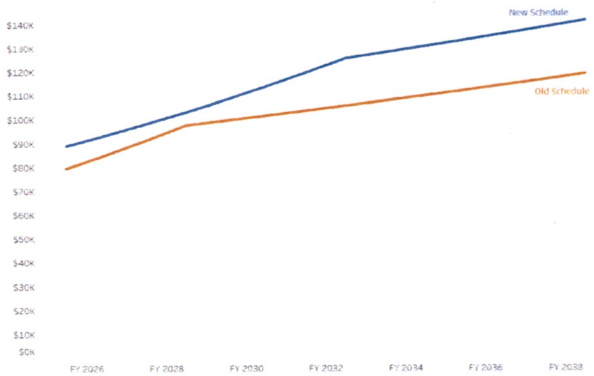
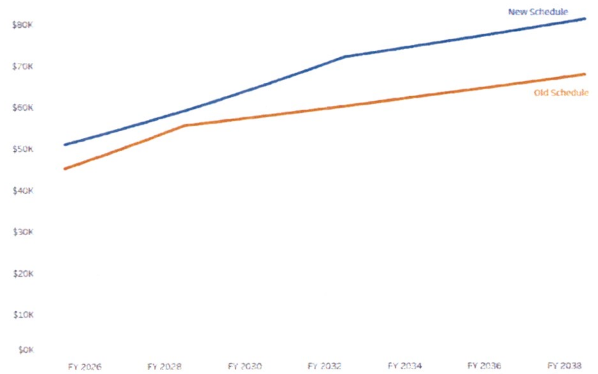
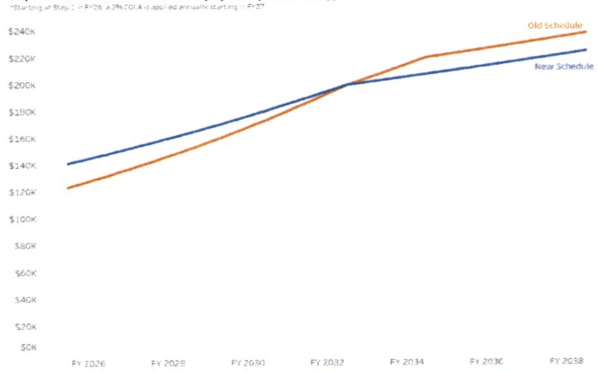
Wastewater Collections Supervisor: Annual Salary by Salary Schedule Type
*Starting at Step 1 in FY26, a 2% COLA is applied annually starting in FY27.



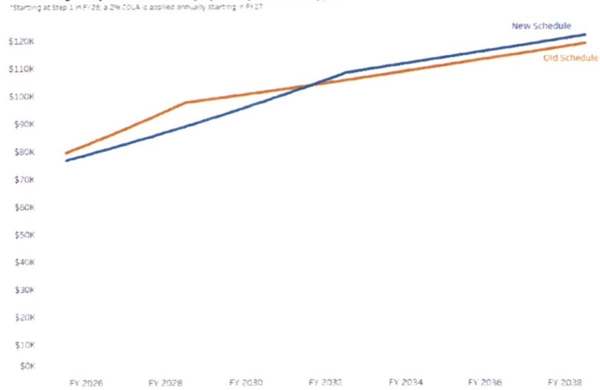
Parks Technician I: Annual Salary by Salary Schedule Type
*Starting at Step 1 in FY26, a 2% COLA is applied annually starting in FY27.



Department Director: Annual Salary by Salary Schedule Type
*Starting at Step 1 in FY26, a 2% COLA is applied annually starting in FY27.



Accounting Analyst: Annual Salary by Salary Schedule Type
*Starting at Step 1 in FY26, a 2% COLA is applied annually starting in FY27.



Impact by fund- total compensation (wage and benefits)

Fund	Cost Difference from Budget (BN)	Identified Savings to Offset Impact (BN)
General Fund	$881,500	$1,001,275
Electric Fund	$448,635	$570,000
Water Fund	$185,000	$200,000
Wastewater Fund	$92,700	$100,500
Stormwater Fund	$25,700	$25,575
Street Fund	$76,200	$78,000
Telecommunication Fund	$101,700	$105,000

General Fund	FY26	FY27	Total
Eliminate Finance Manager Position*	$148,306	$159,915	
Delay hiring Park Tech I	$100,000		
Healthcare Premium Savings	$49,000	$49,000	
Shift to fully insured PLO Plan*	$455,000		
Reduction in HR Professional Services	$40,000		
			$1,001,221
Electric Fund			
Clean Fuel Credit Sale	$570,000		
			$570,000
Water Fund			
Eliminate Generator Replacement	$200,000		
			$200,000
Wastewater Fund			
Healthcare Premium Savings	$9,500		
Reduction in Professional Services	$70,000		
1% Vacancy Rate Savings	$21,000		
			$100,500
Stormwater Fund			
Healthcare Premium Savings	$1,575		
Reduction in Professional Services	$24,000		
			$25,575
Street Fund			
Delay in Vehicle Replacement	$78,000		
			$78,000
Telecommunication Fund			
Delay in Vehicle Replacement	$75,000		
Bandwidth Contract Renegotiation	$30,000		
			$105,000

* on-going savings

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Financial Stabilization

- Appropriate utility rates (on-going)
  - Forthcoming- Electric, Wastewater & Stormwater.
    - Regular rate adjustments ensure proper funding of enterprise funds
- Right size staffing (on-going)
  - Balance of technology and manual processes
    - Payroll software, utility billing software, AMI, pesticides
- Ratio of manager to front line staff (on-going)
    - Finance and Parks department are currently adjusting
- Fleet Evaluation (on-going)
    - Right size fleet/ right size replacement schedule
- Contract evaluation (limited on-going)
  - Reviewing vendor contracts to ensure necessity and discussion with vendors for price adjustments
- Building Department Fund (on-going but details and impact TBD)
- Consideration of contractual services (on-going)
- Building Consolidation and Divestment (on-going (maintenance)/ one-time (divestment))
- Single Role Program/Fire staffing levels/ Reginal Fire Study (on-going)
- Long-term financial planning
  - Essential versus non-essential/ community service level desire

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QUESTIONS?

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