

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Monday, February 2, 2026**

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

Council Present: Mayor Graham, Councilors Bloom, DuQuenne, Hansen, Kaplan, and Sherrell. Dahle appeared via Zoom.

Council Absent:

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Carmel Zarhan	Assistant City Manager

I. Call to Order

II. Reports and Presentations

a. Potential Charter Updates

Cotta presented two potential charter updates for Council's consideration in response to Council direction to bring charter and ordinance administrative changes forward:

- 1) Aligning ordinance noticing requirements with Oregon state law; and,
- 2) Clarifying residency requirements for elected officials.

Regarding ordinance noticing requirements, the current charter language requires three physical copies of ordinances to be available to the public, posted at City Hall, as well as published in a newspaper of general circulation. This is a paper-heavy process requiring money and resources. The proposed charter amendment aims to align the city's requirements with the Oregon Revised Statutes and reduce costs which allows for electronic noticing.

Concerns were raised about referencing specific ORS citations in the charter due to potential future legislative changes that would require voter approval to amend. Discussion included comparison with neighboring municipalities and concerns about relinquishing home rule authority. Zahran clarified the concept of home rule, noting it allows cities to be more restrictive, but not less restrictive, than state or federal law.

Regarding residency requirements, the current charter language does not address a time requirement for residency before running for elected office. The proposal would establish a residency requirement of 12 months prior to running and add that elected officials maintain residency throughout their term of office. The 12-month residency requirement is a recommendation from the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), noted as relevant with four Council seats up for election in November, and was brought forward as a baseline consideration for discussion.

Several councilors spoke against making charter changes at this time, noting that noticing requirements were not causing significant problems, the cost was manageable, and that such changes would be better addressed as part of a larger, more comprehensive charter review.

During discussion about residency requirements, it was noted that the current charter language does not specify when residency must be established or whether it must be maintained throughout an elected official's term. This lack of clarity raised concerns regarding the application process and the implications for both elections and appointments. Kolodzinski explained that the current process involves contacting Jackson County to verify that the candidate is a registered voter and the address provided on a candidate's form matches their voter registration. This ensures the candidate's information aligns with the requirements for running for office. The ambiguity surrounding the timing and maintenance of residency creates potential complications for the certification process.

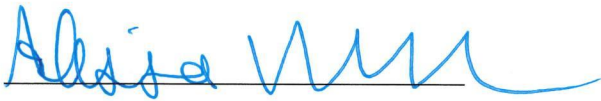
Discussions considered adopting language akin to the State's SEL form with the intent to enhance consistency and eliminate potential ambiguities in the qualification process for both elected and appointed officials. Additional discussion on vacancies in the charter states an office may be deemed vacant if the officeholder ceases to possess qualifications for the office, which could address the concern about maintaining residency.

After extensive discussion, the Council reached consensus not to pursue either charter amendment for the May election. Instead, direction to staff was given to have the Ashland Municipal Code Review Group develop an ordinance to clarify the residency requirements for elected officials, including the requirement to maintain residency throughout one's term and that candidates affirm they meet the qualifications.

The Council emphasized that this approach would provide necessary clarity without requiring charter amendments at this time. They acknowledged that these issues could be revisited as part of a more comprehensive charter review process in the future.

III. Adjournment of Study Session.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 pm.



City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski



Mayor Tonya Graham



SPEAKER REQUEST FORM

Study Session

Submit this form to the meeting Secretary prior to the discussion item.

- 1) You will be called forward when it is your turn to speak
- 2) State your name and speak clearly into the microphone
- 3) Limit your comments to the time allotted
- 4) Provide any written materials to the meeting Secretary
- 5) Speakers are solely responsible for the content of their statement

Date:

2/2/26

Name: (Please Print)

PAUL MOZINA

Ashland Resident:

☒ YES ☐ NO City: _____

Agenda Topic/Item Number:

Charter Updates

Please respect the order of proceedings and strictly follow the directions of the presiding officer. Behavior or actions which are loud or disruptive are disrespectful and offenders will be requested to leave.

Disclaimer: By submitting this request to address the Public Body, I agree that I will refrain from the use of any obscene, vulgar, or profane language. I understand that if I do not follow procedure my speaking time may be terminated, and I may be requested to sit down or leave the building.

You are discussing aligning the Charter with the Oregon State Statutes, but what good is that if the Charter is not enforceable? The Ashland Charter has fundamental flaws and conflicts of interest embedded in it, that make it highly unlikely that—if the Council were to violate it—they would be held accountable.

Last summer I contacted Ashland Chief of Police, Tighe O'Meara, regarding the Council's violation of the Charter's requirement that any action taken by the Council be preceded by a public motion and vote. The Charter mandates that the Chief is responsible for enforcing the Charter and that failure to do so is grounds for removal. He asked me to explain the nature of the violations. In response to my summary, and citation of his duties under the Charter, he had this to say:

Paul, WHILE I AGREE THAT THE CHARTER HAS THOSE WORDS, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE MEANT TO MAKE ME RESPONSIBLE for investigating procedural deficiencies if they do in fact exist. The City Attorney is the Parliamentarian for Council operations, so he, not me, would be in charge of addressing this. However, it is PRESUMPTIOUS to assume that this is anything other than, at worst, a simple mistake.

As you have seen I have cc'd the CM [City Manager] and the CA [City Attorney], and I will await guidance from them about what next steps, if any, are to be taken. [my emphasis]

He quickly followed up with this:

Paul, just to close the loop on this, I have learned that the CA has already addressed your concerns, so I will not be looking into this any further. Have a good day.

While ostensibly being responsible for enforcing the Charter, the Chief relied on the opinion of the "Parliamentarian", City Attorney Johan Pietila's, justification of the Council's actions to ignore my "presumptuous [sic]" complaint. Never mind that the Chief didn't bother to explain exactly how the CA had addressed my concern that the council's "procedural deficiencies" were in fact violations of the Ashland Charter.

The May 19, 2025, Council Study Session and the June 3, 2025, Council Business Meeting occurred shortly after Pietila had been appointed City Attorney. He was newly responsible for insuring that the Council followed parliamentary rules—including the Ashland Charter. Apparently, this made him the perfect person to judge whether or not the Council, under his watchful eye, had violated the explicit requirements of the Charter when they failed to vote on the amendments they made to the 2025-2027 Biennial Budget.

The principle that “no one shall be a judge in his own cause” originated in ancient Roman Law and is obviously a cornerstone to any adjudicative procedure. But the obvious conflict of interest in this case was no impediment to Chief O’Meara: **THE PARLIAMENTARIAN HAS RULED**, now “Have a good day.”

The Charter also stipulates regarding the Chief that: “... and a failure or neglect to faithfully perform any or all of such duties shall be cause for REMOVAL FROM OFFICE BY THE CITY COUNCIL.” Does anyone think the Council would remove the Chief for failing to hold THEM accountable for obeying the Charter?

The inherent structural flaws in the Ashland Charter make it highly unlikely that it will be enforced when the perpetrators of the violations are the Mayor and Council. When those responsible for investigating the violations serve at their pleasure of the violators, nothing will be done. When the City Attorney is allowed to be the judge in his own cause and the Chief of Police is too lazy to investigate the matter, the Ashland Charter is unenforceable.

Please see my Ashland Chronicle article “**Is the Ashland Charter Enforceable?**” for the complete timeline of my attempt to file a complaint against the Ashland City Council.

<https://theashlandchronicle.com/guest-opinion-is-the-ashland-charter-enforceable>