

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Monday, April 13, 2026**

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**I. Special Meeting**

Council Present: Mayor Graham, and Councilors Sherrell, Bloom, Kaplan, and DuQuenne.

Council Absent: Councilor Hansen

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Jordan Rooklyn	Deputy City Manager
Johan Pietila	City Attorney
Tighe O'Meara	Police Chief
Dan Moulin	Deputy Police Chief
John Lohrfink	Deputy Police Chief

Graham called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

a. Land Acknowledgement\*\*

Kaplan read the land acknowledgement.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. ROLL CALL**

**IV. PUBLIC FORUM**

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

a. *Proposed Approach to Camping Framework and Location*

Cotta introduced the item, noting it was brought back from the prior council business meeting at the request of Bloom. Police Chief O'Meara, deputy chiefs, and representatives from Opportunities for Housing, Resources, and Assistance (OHRA) were present to provide operational context.

Bloom presented his proposed multi-meeting policy framework (see agenda packet). He clarified that the process was not designed to reach a predetermined outcome, that facilitation remained the Mayor's role, and that advocates should have a defined seat at the table including the ability to submit their own recommendations directly to the Council. He emphasized the need for deliberate, sequential meetings rather than a single session and that the current meeting was intended to develop an agreed upon framework for the complex discussion rather than delving into details.

**Public Comment Open**

Three members of the public offered testimony related to the agenda item. Speakers generally expressed support for a structured, collaborative policy process and emphasized the importance of including homeless community members and advocates directly in each meeting rather than having their perspectives interpreted by others. One speaker suggested involving the City's Human Services Committee in the process. Another proposed consideration of Resolve, a neutral mediation organization with relevant local experience, as a potential facilitator.

**Public Comment Closed**

**Council discussion on scope and process:** The Council confirmed unanimous support for undertaking a formal policy process. Discussion centered on whether the scope should be limited strictly to the Night Lawn or broadened. It was clarified that the intent was not to expand to the entire homelessness services landscape, but to ensure that questions of site management and daytime access for Night Lawn residents were addressed alongside the question of location. The Council reached consensus that the process should include interrelated policy questions: (1) the vision and intended purpose of a designated camping space, (2) site location, (3) operational management standards, and (4) daytime options for Night Lawn residents.

Pietila provided background on the legal framework, noting that the City's camping ordinance and the Night Lawn were established in response to the need to legally enforce restrictions on camping in the public right-of-way. He referenced *Blake v. City of Grants Pass* and *Bilodeau v. City of Medford* as the controlling case law under which cities must demonstrate "objectively reasonable" steps – including providing alternative locations and partnering with housing opportunities – in order to enforce such ordinances.

**Operational concerns raised by staff and subject-matter experts:** O'Meara urged the Council to revisit the expanded Night Lawn hours adopted at the prior meeting, warning that allowing near-continuous occupancy risked repeating prior problems including significant pest infestations, physical degradation of the site, and potential legal obligations arising from the precedent set by expanded services. He recommended reverting clearance hours to 7:30 AM and 4:30 PM, respectively. Dan Cano, Executive Director of OHRA, noted that a percentage of the unhoused population would always resist congregate shelter options and cautioned against increased management which could lead to increased liability. He emphasized the importance of meeting basic needs – sanitation, storage access, transportation – while keeping the space from becoming a permanent encampment. Cotta noted that the primary concern from advocates was the daily clearance window, rather than weekend or holiday flexibility, and requested that the daily hours be revisited.

Pietila advised that because the hour change was enacted by formal Council vote, a motion to reconsider would be required and could not properly be entertained at this special meeting given its limited noticed scope. The Council directed that the Night Lawn hours question be formally noticed and brought back for discussion at the April 21 regular meeting, at which point advocate and neighborhood feedback would also be received.

**Path forward:** The Council directed staff to schedule a dedicated study session on May 18 as the first meeting in the policy process. That session will serve as a level-set and will include: a legal briefing from the City Attorney on the camping ordinance framework and applicable case law; a presentation on the history and lessons learned from the Night Lawn; a map of City-owned properties; a financial overview of current expenditures and budgeted resources; and preliminary discussion of process scope and structure. Consideration was given to inviting Resolve (a neutral mediation organization), the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee, and other subject-matter experts such as library staff to participate in or inform the process. The Council also noted that the Housing and

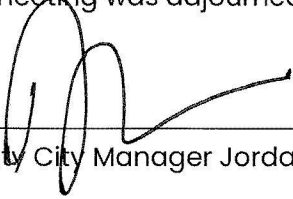
Human Services Advisory Committee's prior homeless services assessment could provide a useful foundation, and that councilors may attend that committee's public meetings in an observational capacity. Staff was directed to keep the May 18 session focused on orientation and scoping, with subsequent meetings to be scheduled based on the direction that emerges from that first session.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

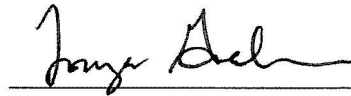
**Bloom moved to adjourn. Seconded by DuQuenne**

**All Ayes. Motion passed.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:13 p.m.



Deputy City Manager Jordan Rooklyn



Mayor Tonya Graham



## SPEAKER REQUEST FORM

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:

*Kathy McNeill*

Name: (Please Print)

Ashland Resident:

YES  NO City: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Topic/Item Number:

*Va*

Public Forum Topic (Non-agenda Item):

*Va*

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.



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Date: April 13, 2022

Name: (Please Print)  
Rich Rohde

Ashland Resident:  
 YES    NO   City: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Topic/Item Number:  
✓ Camping Framework

Public Forum Topic (Non-agenda Item):

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Date: 4/13/26

Name: (Please Print) Debbie Neisewander

Ashland Resident:  
 YES  NO City: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Topic/Item Number:  
Nite Lawn/Gasfield Park

Public Forum Topic (Non-agenda Item):

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