

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Monday, September 15, 2025**

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Council Absent: none

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Marshall Rasor	Interim Fire Chief
Tighe O'Meara	Police Chief

I. Call to Order

II. Reports and Presentations

a. Regional Fire Service Planning and Capacity Study Introduction

Cotta introduced Fire Chief Mike Hussey of Jackson County District 3, and Ashland Interim Fire Chief Marshall Rasor. The regional study was made possible by Hussey who secured funding for participation to address requests for a regional examination of public safety related to fire service which surfaced during recent budget discussions. Under the study, the City of Ashland will collaborate with Fire Districts 1, 2, 3, and 5, Evans Valley Fire District, and Jacksonville to explore improvements in regional emergency service delivery. The study is in the Request For Proposal (RFP) phase and is seeking a consultant. The work would take place over fall and winter with draft and final reports expected in spring and summer of next year. Concurrently, Ashland will assess its own fire service including the Ambulance Service Area (ASA) and staffing models.

Councilors asked about enhancing fire service efficiency, improving emergency response capabilities, what has changed, and what the future looks like for fire services. Hussey explained that there has not been a comprehensive regional assessment of service delivery and future improvements since he joined the fire service in 1991. He noted that demands for service continue to escalate while the cost of doing business outpaces current revenue. The study originated from the Rogue Valley Fire Rescue Alliance, recognizing that all fire services train to the same standards and share the same mission despite serving different communities. The goal of the regional study is to reduce duplication, build efficiency across organizations, and share resources even when there isn't an active emergency.

Councilors asked how the study would account for Ashland's unique services, what Jackson County government's role would be in the study, and about model communities the study would aspire to emulate. Hussey responded that each jurisdiction would have a dedicated consultant assigned to evaluate specific needs, noting that Ashland is somewhat ahead in having these plans already in place. Examination would include under-protected areas of Jackson County not served by municipal fire departments or districts, acknowledging the vulnerability of unprotected populations and frontier fringe areas. Some states have adopted models where agencies form authorities, though Oregon's

statutes limit what can be done. Study goals include ensuring appropriate adjustment to local needs with financial solvency in mind.

Cotta and Rasor provided examples of current collaboration between Rogue Valley service providers, including automatic and mutual aid agreements, shared testing processes, equipment loans, and personnel sharing. Rasor noted that Jackson and Josephine counties have a model of mutual aid that has been recognized inside and outside of Oregon.

Council discussion included projected increase in wildfire risk due to ongoing climate change and the need to develop a system responsive to future needs. Hussey confirmed the study will consider long-term planning solutions, leaving each organization to decide what recommendations to implement. Hussey explained that Medford chose not to participate but had recently completed their own study. He noted that regionalization is an Oregon trend, with Eugene-Springfield already working as an intergovernmental entity.

b. Dusk to Dawn Lawn Overview and OHRA partnership Review

Cotta introduced the item, explaining that the night lawn was established in May of 2023 to allow for enforcement of the city's camping ordinance. Located adjacent to a city building, it allows for overnight tent camping with a dumpster, hand washing station, and porta potties provided. Dan Cano, Executive Director of OHRA (Opportunities for Housing, Resources, and Assistance), was introduced, to speak about the pilot program that began with Southern Oregon Housing for All (SOHA) helping with a daytime storage locker at the lawn, which transitioned to OHRA for oversight. Recent site improvements at the lawn include a partnership with Boulder Care for telehealth addiction recovery services through enhanced Wi-Fi capability.

Cano explained that OHRA has a campus on Ashland Street with a 50-bed shelter, a walk-in resource center serving both housed and unhoused individuals, and a cooling shelter during the summer, serving an average of 17-20 people on days when temperatures exceeded 95 degrees. After winter storms, OHRA staff who volunteered at the Dusk to Dawn lawn noticed challenges with volunteer consistency and coordination. OHRA initiated a three-month test program to establish a more consistent volunteer presence in the morning and evening, provide training, and increase daytime storage capacity. Cano clarified that OHRA's goals were to increase consistency with helping those coping with mental health issues, rather than management of the lawn site or rule enforcement. Twelve lawn guests have been sheltered by OHRA during the pilot program, demonstrating the benefits of partnering with a professional service provider.

Councilors asked for information about officer hours spent at the lawn and service call types. O'Meara agreed to provide this data later in the week but noted that comparing time spent on lawn calls versus similar calls elsewhere would be more challenging. O'Meara reflected that the increased occupancy at the night law, might be related to changes in Grants Pass policies and/or people being expelled from Medford. Cano cautioned against drawing conclusions by noting many factors could contribute including increased consistency in making the lawn feel safer. Councilors deliberated on the improved storage management at the Dusk to Dawn lawn, highlighting the benefits of having 35

storage bins available for those utilizing the camping site. There was a recognition that this enhanced storage management directly contributes to improving the experience and safety for both the lawn guests and the broader community.

Councilors agreed to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

Councilors noted the importance of connecting people with services and questioned what happens when the lawn reaches capacity. It was explained that there was no designated overflow space in Ashland, and the discussion turned to regional resources. Legal guidance was requested on how to enforce the camping ordinance before capacity issues arise. Councilors discussed the possibility of installing more permanent infrastructure at the lawn and/or relocating operations to the 2200 Ashland Street property. The discussion highlighted that the 2200 Ashland Street property was originally purchased to serve as a severe weather shelter, camping site, and location for affordable housing development, but Council would need to determine its future use. The importance of partnering with organizations like OHRA, which have the necessary expertise the city lacks, was emphasized.

Councilors agreed to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

After extensive discussion about future options, staff was directed to come back with answers to three questions prior to the December retreat:

1. Data on police calls at the lawn
2. Clarification of ordinances related to camping bans and state law
3. Assessment of city-owned properties as potential alternative sites

Cano confirmed OHRA's willingness to extend their pilot program and emphasized the importance of including service providers' operational perspective in future planning.

III. Adjournment of Study Session

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.



City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski



Mayor Tonya Graham



A PROCLAMATION IN HONOR OF CONSTITUTION DAY, CITIZENSHIP DAY, AND CONSTITUTION WEEK

WHEREAS, September 17, 2025, marks the 238th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States of America by the Constitutional Convention in 1787; and

WHEREAS, Each year, on September 17, Americans celebrate Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, reflecting on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and what it means to be a U.S. citizen; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution, along with the Bill of Rights and other amendments, defines our government and guarantees our rights; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Week commemorates the eventful week in 1787 when the Constitution was signed, delivered to the Continental Congress, and made known to the people of the country; it laid the foundation for the birth of a new nation and became one of the most significant chapters in our shared history; and

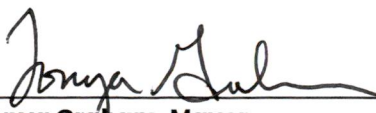
WHEREAS, It is fitting and proper to offer official recognition to this visionary document and its memorable anniversary; and to the celebrations which will commemorate the occasion; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's military service members, elected leaders, and civil servants across many disciplines take a sacred oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution belongs to "We The People," and no president or other elected leader has the authority to rewrite the fundamental guarantees enshrined in our founding charter;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tonya Graham, Mayor of Ashland, do hereby proclaim September 17, 2025, as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day and September 17-23 as Constitution Week. I invite all citizens to spend time this week with our Constitution and discuss with friends, family, and neighbors what this document means to our democracy and how we can work together to protect and defend it. In Ashland we are Better Together.

Dated this 16th day of September 2025.


Tonya Graham, Mayor


Alissa Kolodzinski, City Recorder

