

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
October 2, 2023**

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order 5:31 p.m.

1. Public Input – None

2. Ashland Emergency Shelter

a. Operations Overview Presentation

City Manager Joe Lessard provided a presentation (see attached):

- Ashland Emergency Shelter (AES)
- Where We Are Now – Oregon
- Where We Are Now, What we're learned, Next Steps
- Where We Are Now – Governor Emergency Homelessness Declaration
- Where We Are Now – Jackson County/Ashland Goals
- Where We Are Now – Site Aerial
- Where We Are Now – City of Ashland Programs – OHRA Center
- Where We Are Now – Emergency Order Shelter is NOT and IS
- Where We Are Now – Emergency Order Shelter Will Have/Shelter Operations
- What We're Learning
- Next Steps

b. OHRA Program Update Presentation

Dennis Slattery from OHRA's board of directors explained the services OHRA provided. Cassie Sinclair, the executive director of OHRA, provided a presentation (see attached):

- OHRA Helping low-income neighbors' live better lives – Our Vision, Our Mission
- The OHRA Center: A Community Asset
- OHRA's Three Programs
- Resource Navigation Assistance is Broad
- OHRA's Resource Center
- OHRA's Shelter
- OHRA's Shower Trailer
- OHRA's Housing Outcomes

Mr. Lessard addressed privacy screening. They were considering plants or a lattice fence. Concern was expressed regarding the two-story house across from the shelter and their privacy. There was a request not to place facilities in that area.

There was a suggestion to involve the unhoused as the shelter moved forward.

Ms. Sinclair explained OHRA would have two navigators onsite for the emergency shelter. Mr. Lessard clarified the emergency order shelter would be in one part of the building and the severe weather shelter would be run in another section of the building. Due to building and fire code issues, the severe weather shelter could not be run after the emergency order

shelter ended. The building needed alterations for the severe weather shelter to run long term. Additionally, the fire safety plan had not been approved but is currently under review.

Mr. Slattery did not think OHRA was attracting more homeless people to that area. Homelessness has increased over the last years. OHRA was treating more people but there were many who did not want help. There was a need for increased enforcement in the that area. It would require a multi layered approach.

Ms. Sinclair clarified OHRA had experience running shelters and would provide the same services OHRA provided at their building. There would be a 24-7 fire watch as well as background checks. Mr. Slattery added they needed continued support from several areas to be sustainable and effective for the long term.

Ms. Sinclair explained there would be guests at the low barrier shelter with substance use disorders and they would sign an agreement not to use while on the property. If they must evict someone, OHRA would do everything they could to find a shelter elsewhere. If someone is not abiding by the rules, they might get evicted. Police Chief Tighe O'Meara added they could offer the dusk to dawn campsite, other services, contact a social service provider, even drive them to Medford. If the police department participated in the removal of a guest at 2200 Ashland or OHRA, they would try to find something to do with that person. If that person did not want to go anywhere, there was not much the police could do other than monitor them.

Mr. Lessard explained there was funding for the shelter through Jan 10, 2024. This was the best the city could do. For 71 days, thirty individuals will have an opportunity to get past their barriers. After that it will be severe weather operations only unless there are additional funds to extend. The fire code will prevent the city from operating the emergency order shelter ended. Housing Program Manager Linda Reid added that through the emergency order, the Multi Coordination Group was established and looking at future legislation. Alternately, the Jackson County Continuum of Care was advocating for more rapid rehousing funding.

Mr. Lessard addressed a question on what happened outside the shelter and how will the city respond. It would fall to enforcement. He went on to explain the city did not have the resources to reach out to other providers. In the past, faith-based organizations volunteered to run shelters but there had been a dramatic decline in volunteering, and it fell to the city.

Ms. Reid addressed potential congregate issues. There were discussions about using the garage space as a waiting area for the shower. OHRA was a seasoned shelter provider and when they ran the other shelter, there were no congregate issues.

Mr. Slattery suggested a postmortem after January 10, 2024, with all the stakeholders. He noted that section of town had always been a place where people camped and was a

challenge. The people who come to OHRA did not run around the streets. The sense that crime has increased since OHRA started may be statistically true, but homelessness has increased dramatically. The number of homeless had doubled despite OHRA's best efforts.

c. Public Input

Janet Bell/Ashland/Noted the fencing needed to be improved and there was a path that needed consideration. Shop N Kart and Albertsons had hired security. She wanted to know where people staying at the shelter would do during the day.

Vincent Rice/Ashland/Spoke in support of the shelter and addressed the humanity of the homeless. If there was not enough money for the shelter, the city could cut staff salaries.

Council clarified that the funds for the shelter came from grants. The emergency order shelter was different from the severe weather shelter. People staying at the emergency order shelter would remain indoors during the day and not spill out into the neighborhood. The severe weather shelter was open at night and typically drew smaller numbers of people.

Tina Sanford/Ashland/Owns the DMV building. She was glad the focus was on homes but appreciated that someone brought up what businesses had been experiencing. She was not there to condemn OHRA but to protect her property. She explained they had called repeatedly about the transient who had started the Oak Knoll fire and did not feel heard. There needed to be better ordinances and laws. Businesses needed resources they could rely on.

Debbie Neisewander/Ashland/Wanted to know if OHRA was taking applications and thought Ashland should take priority over other areas. She also wanted to know if there would be a bus to take people from the severe weather shelter to the library during the day.

Ms. Sinclair explained OHRA served Jackson County. OHRA conducted vulnerability screenings on people who came to them. OHRA was not marketing services throughout the valley.

d. City Council Discussion

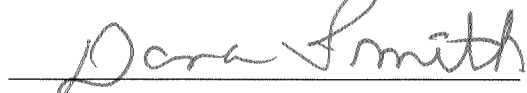
Council directed staff to work on the following:

- The city manager and police chief develop a list of ordinances to help enforcement.
- Establish a framework for responsiveness, include garbage, fire, police, etc.
- Have some form of outreach, a community development plan, to help the businesses in southeast Ashland.
- Work with Siskiyou school on fencing the easement.
- Work with stakeholders on a concept for a long-term program and bring it to the neighborhood. Have the Housing and Human Services Committee research what might be possible on the building site.

- Work with the neighborhood to determine the best layout for facilities at the shelter so it is not problematic for the neighbors.

3. Adjournment of Study Session

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Clerk of the Council Pro Tem Dana Smith

Attest:



Mayor Tonya Graham

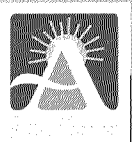


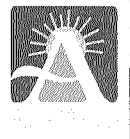
Ashland Emergency Shelter (AES)

City Council Study Session
October 2, 2023

Ashland Emergency Shelter – Overview

1. Where we are now
2. What we've learned
3. Next steps





Where We Are Now

Oregon

- o State has **fourth highest rate** of unsheltered homelessness **in US**
 - 42 of every 10,000 in state (Calif. – 44 of every 10,000)
 - At least 18,000 experience homelessness per 2022 count
- o 63% increase in homelessness in six years (2017-2022)
 - Center Oregon – 86% increase
 - Eugene-Springfield/Land County – 110% increase
 - **Medford-Ashland/Jackson Co. – 132 % increase**
 - Salem/Marian-Polk Co. – 150% increase
 - 62% of state's homeless are “unsheltered” (outdoors/cars)



Where We Are Now

Governor's Emergency Homelessness Declaration

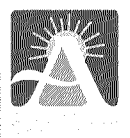
- o Effective dates – Jan. 10, 2023-Jan. 10, 2024
- o For **areas with increase of 50%** or greater homelessness
- o Funding – \$11,125,617 to address unsheltered homelessness
- o Goals
 - **Prevention** – 8,750 households from homelessness
 - **Shelter** – Add 600 low-barrier beds
 - **Rehouse** – At least 1,200 households



Where We Are Now

Jackson County/Ashland Goals

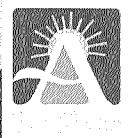
- **Prevention** – 1,200 households from homelessness
 - Medford – 1,104 households
 - Ashland – OHRA 96 households
- **Shelter** – Add at least 67 low-barrier beds
 - Medford – 80 beds
 - Ashland – 30 bed in Emergency Order Shelter
- **Rehouse** – At least 133 households
 - Medford – 96 households
 - Ashland – OHRA 37 households



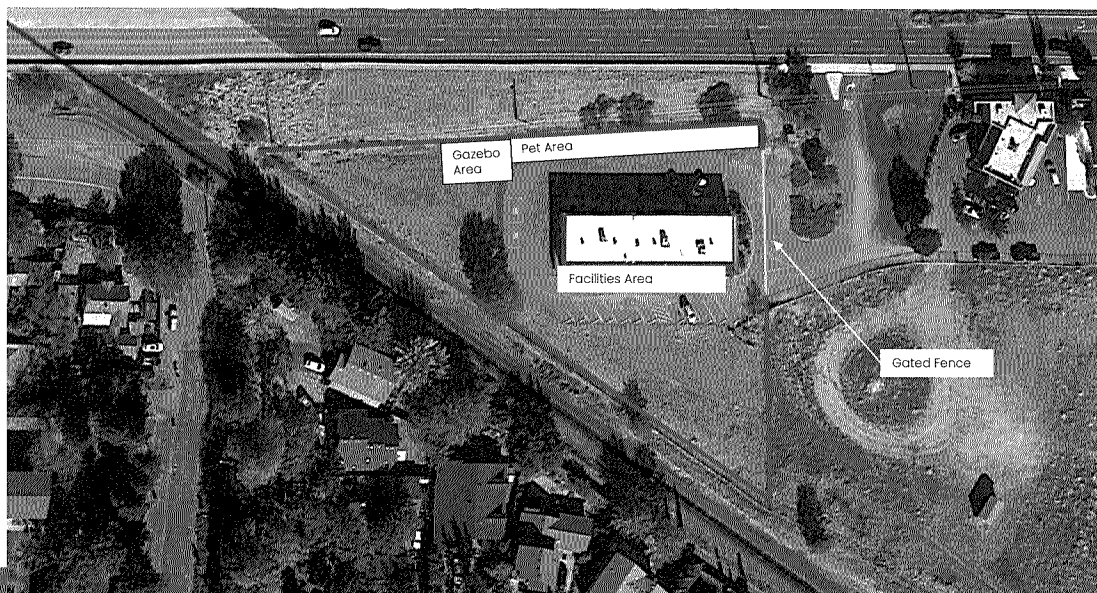
Where We Are Now

City of Ashland

- Obligation to address homelessness in our community
 - Homelessness estimated at **80-125** (approx. 10% of Jackson Co. est.)
 - **Will grow** in Oregon & Jackson County
- Balance needs of all citizens
 - Preserve health and public safety
 1. **Dusk-to-Dawn** sleeping lawn
 2. **Severe Weather Shelter** – prevent health risk or loss of life
 3. **Emergency Order Shelter** – stability & navigate to housing
 4. **Enforce behavioral expectations**
 - No exclusive use of parks & public rights-of-way (ROW)
 - Trespass (private property / railroad ROW)
 - Partner with community organizations
 - Multi-agency coordination for continuum of care approach



Where We Are Now



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Where We Are Now

City of Ashland Programs

Severe Weather Shelter:

- **Health & Public Safety Measure**
- **Over Night Shelter**
 - Approx. Nov.-Mar. funded
 - 7:00 p.m. – 7:30 a.m.
- **Shelter Thresholds**
 - Cold – 32° or below
 - Hot – 95° or above
 - Smoke – 150 Air Quality Index

Emergency Order Shelter:

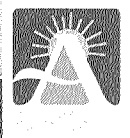
- **Governor's Emergency Declaration**
 - Jan. 10, 2024 expiration
- **71 days operations**
 - Nov. 1-Jan. 10 funded
 - Navigation services for occupants
 - Experienced 24/7 oversight
- **30+ accepted applicants**
 - Screened for Vulnerability
 - Screened for sex offender registry

OHRA Center

Resource Center:

- **Walk-In**
 - Navigation services
 - Resource referral
- **52 shelter rooms**
 - 6 mos. Stability
 - Navigation services
 - Experienced 24/7 oversight

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Where We Are Now

Emergency Order Shelter Is NOT

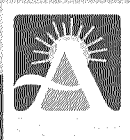
- A walk-in center
- A campground
- A nightly sleep/camping lawn

Emergency Order Shelter Is

- State **funded for Nov. 1–Jan. 10** operation only
 - Assigned beds for at least **30 beds**
 - Operated 24/7 by an experienced shelter operator
 - Supervised on-site during all operating hours
 - Behavioral standards for occupants
- Navigation resource support

City is Requiring Application/Screening for Admission

- Sex offender registry website check



Where We Are Now

Emergency Order Shelter Will Have

- Site fencing/screening
- Access gate with site curfew hours
- Interior access point and exterior security cameras
- Exterior security lighting & smoking area
- Adequate toilet & sanitation stations

During Emergency Order Shelter Operations

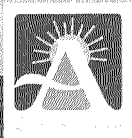
- City Will
 - Work with Siskiyou School to secure City easement
 - Work to close neighborhood bike path fencing gaps
- APD Will
 - **Expand patrol presence** from downtown to include Ashland Street/Clay Street/bike path area (five new discreet shelter neighborhood patrol areas)
 - **Expand cadet program** from three using vacancy savings to assist in patrol of City parks & other properties
 - **Explore store front office** option in Exit 14 area



What We're Learning

Neighborhood Concerns are Community-wide Concerns

- Homeless in neighborhoods
 - Property intrusions and resulting trash/waste
 - Ongoing fencing issues (railroad ROW & bike path access)
- Economic impacts of homeless in City
- Questions on future of Ashland's current approaches
 - Dusk to Dawn sleeping lawn
 - Severe Weather Shelter
 - Emergency Order Shelter – Pilot Program
 - Enforcement (including camping ordinance updates)
- Questions on next steps – planning in Ashland & regionally
 - Future state funding questions
 - Planning process for potential uses of shelter site
 - Access to bike path
 - Community goals and monitoring
 - Severe Weather & Emergency Order Shelter operations
 - Code enforcement / Police / Fire & Rescue



Next steps

Facility 2023

- **Oct. 2** – Public forum on Emergency Shelter at Council Chambers, including update presentation on shelter implementation
- **Mid Oct.** – Emergency order shelter open house; Application process initiated
- **Nov. 1** – Full operation with accepted applicants

Facility 2024

- **Jan. 10** – Shelter transitioning to Severe Weather Shelter operations status
- **Jan. 11 – Mar. 31** – Severe Weather Shelter operations

Planning 2023–2024

- **Nov. – Jan.** – City Council Next Steps Planning Process

THANK YOU

To submit questions/comments and view updates, please visit:

ashland.or.us/EmergencyShelter





Helping low-income neighbors live better lives.

Our Vision

To help people **move from crisis to stability**, to build more capable individuals, stronger families and a better community.

Our Mission

To help **low-income people build better lives**. By offering hope and access to social service resources, we encourage those in need on the **path to self-sufficiency**.

The OHRA Center: A Community Asset

- ❖ Co-located Resource Center and Shelter means more effective assistance
- ❖ More space for more skilled staff to meet an increasing demand
- ❖ LaClinica's onsite health center
- ❖ A partner room for rotating services such as credit counseling, job assistance, and benefit applications
- ❖ A Shelter providing dignity, privacy and greater stability



OHRA's Three Programs



OHRA's Resource
Center



OHRA's Shelter



OHRA's Shower
Trailer

Resource Navigation Assistance is Broad

Direct Help With:

- ✦ Rental Assistance
- ✦ Utility Assistance
- ✦ Computer Access
- ✦ Job Searching
- ✦ Resume Writing
- ✦ Phone and Mail Services
- ✦ Bus Passes
- ✦ Pet Food
- ✦ Goodwill Vouchers
- And More

Applications to / Refer to:

- ✦ Affordable Housing
- ✦ Section 8 Vouchers
- ✦ Sober Housing
- ✦ Transitional Housing
- ✦ Permanent Supported Housing
- ✦ VA Housing
- ✦ Credit Assistance
- ✦ Legal Advocacy
- ✦ Health Insurance
- ✦ Social Security, Disability & Vet Benefits
- ✦ Birth Certificates
- ✦ Mental & Physical Health Services
- ✦ Substance Use Recovery
- ✦ SNAP Food Benefits
- ✦ State Assistance Programs
- And More



OHRA's Resource Center

We are the only walk-in Resource Center in Jackson County

- ❖ 55 guests each day—no screening or program registration required
- ❖ Navigators often meet multiple times with each guest
- ❖ Adults and families with children – housed or homeless – use the Resource Center.

At the Resource Center, people can retake control of their lives.



OHRA's Shelter

- ❖ A professionally staffed, low-barrier adult shelter
- ❖ We are staffed 24/7/365.
- ❖ 52 rooms with up to 72 guests who can stay 6 months
- ❖ ADA accessible and secure
- ❖ All shelter guests meet with Resource Navigators to move towards permanent housing.





OHRA's Shower Trailer

- ❖ Laundry and shower services for people who are unhoused.
- ❖ A crucial access point to OHRA's Resource Navigators.
- ❖ Partners with Laundry Love, OHSU School of Nursing, La Clinica



OHRA's Housing Outcomes:

Shelter and Resource Center: Combined	
Families in New Housing (Combined)	656
Men	285
Women	270
Children	97
Total Individuals	652
Housed families protected	
Men	353
Women	470
Children	380
Total Individuals	1,409