

Ashland Citizens Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 30, 3:00 PM -5:30 PM
Council Chambers, 1175 E Main Street

I. Call to Order

Chair Shane Hunter called the meeting to order at 3:00pm

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Tonya Graham, Councilor Eric Hansen, Councilor Gina DuQuenne, Councilor Dylan Bloom, Councilor Jeff Dahle, Committee Members Shane Hunter, James Fredericks, Michael Murray, Ariana Spiegler, Meg Wade, and Linda Peterson Adams.

Absent: Councilor Bob Kaplan and Committee Member Kristen Roy

III. Call for Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Linda Peterson Adams/ Eric Hansen Motion/Second. I move to nominate Shane Hunter as Chair of the 25-27 Citizens Budget Committee

Roll Call Vote: Wade, Bloom, Adams, DuQuenne, Fredericks, Graham, Hansen, Murray, Dahle, Spiegler YES.
Motion Passes.

Jeff Dahle/James Fredericks Motion/Second. I move to nominate Linda Peterson Adams as Vice Chair.

Roll Call Vote: Spiegler, Dahle, Murray, Hansen, Hunter, Graham, Fredericks, DuQuenne, Bloom, Wade YES.
Motion Passes.

IV. Public Forum

No speakers

V. Budget Presentations

City Manager Sabrina Cotta shared the 2025/2027 Biennial Budget Message. She discussed the increase in cost of labor and a large list of deferred maintenance that will be addressed in the upcoming biennium. The City is not expecting to receive as much grant revenue and has trimmed personnel to ensure the

budget is balanced. Due to the uncertainty around the economic climate, the City has developed a conservative budget.

Finance Director Mariane Berry highlighted changes in the budget book and summarized the Budget Committee's responsibilities.

Ashland Fiber Network Manager Chad Sobotka presented the Ashland Fiber Network's (AFN) budget. The majority of revenue is generated by selling broadband services. Ashland is currently servicing 4,500 households with 6 FTEs. Changes for the biennium include an increased franchise fee, elimination of the IT Director position after consolidating under the Finance Department, and sharing a position with IT. AFN anticipates an increase in revenue due to customer growth. The pilot project update will be presented to the Council on June 2, 2025.

Electric Director Tom McBartlett presented the Electric Department's budget. The purchase of substation reduced costs by around \$150,000 per year during the previous biennium. As outlined in the Department's masterplan, the Department hopes to meet capacity by 2033. The Department completed the Wildfire Mitigation Plan last biennium but will continue to implement and update in the upcoming biennium. It will continue to look for grants for hardening or renewable installations. The Electric Fund budget is \$42.4 million for the biennium.

Public Works Director Scott Fleury and Deputy Public Works Director Mike Morrison presented the Public Works budget. Significant changes include increases in infrastructure and chemical costs. The Department is looking at resolving staffing issues in the Support Division and continues to look for grant opportunities. The Department hopes to complete its master plan and begin an implementation plan that will be presented to Council in the future. Infrastructure is the largest increase in the Street Fund. The biggest project moving forward for the Water Fund is the Water Treatment Plant. There are also a couple of big projects planned for the City's reservoir including dam safety updates and construction and replacement of a bridge above the reservoir and another east of Ashland Creek. The Wastewater Treatment Plant will have some infrastructure expenditures for the replacement of aging components. There is a large capital expense at the City's Airport mostly covered by grants. The City's cemeteries have a trust fund to support capital and operations. Public Works divisions in the General Fund include Support, Facilities, Custodial, Cemetery and now GIS (previously included in IT's budget). Support's spending has been reduced on copiers and materials.

Police Chief Tighe O'Meara presented the Police Department's budget. The Department's FTE has decreased from 39 to 38 FTEs after a records clerk position was eliminated. The org chart is likely going to change due to a recent retirement announcement. The budget is mostly unchanged other than personnel costs. The Department's largest obligation is to Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon. The Department pays about \$550,000 per year for dispatch services. The Department has not fully budgeted for dispatch services in the past, covering the difference with other budgeted line items, so this upcoming budget includes catch-up costs.

Interim Fire Chief Marshall Rasor presented the Fire Department budget. During the prior biennium the Department launched the Single-Role EMS program with 8 FTEs. The Department is introducing a public safety fee and increasing the existing wildfire risk reduction fee in the upcoming biennium. Significant increases are due to the cost of personnel and increases in the cost of software.

VI. Q&A

The City will continue to fully vet the single role EMS program in preparation for the 2027-2029 biennial budget, at which time the city will review the number of employees and how the program is operating.

Concerns were shared about losing federal funding. The City will continue to monitor and search for other funding opportunities. Many of the City's essential services are not reliant on federal funds.

VII. Meeting Adjourned

Meeting Adjourned at 4:44 PM.

Note: Committee Member Adams requested items regarding Oregon Public Meeting Law, the WIFIA Loan, and the Police Department Fees discussion be added to the record and can be viewed by watching the meeting video.