

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

Monday, March 14, 2022

Held Electronically

View on Channel 9 or Channels 180 and 181 (for Charter Communications customers)

or live stream via rvtv.sou.edu select RVTV Prime.

Written and oral testimony will be accepted for public input. For written testimony, email public-testimony@ashland.or.us using the subject line: Ashland City Council Public Testimony. For oral testimony, fill out a Speaker Request Form at ashland.or.us/speakerrequest and return to the City Recorder. The deadline for submitting written testimony or speaker request forms will be on Monday, March 14th at 10 a.m. and must comply with Council Rules to be accepted.

1. Public Input (15 minutes, maximum)

None.

2. City Council Election Process of Parks Commission Vacancy

City Manager Joe Lessard gave a brief Staff report.

Parks and Recreation Director Michael Black gave an overview of the process.

Commissioner Rick Landt spoke regarding the process.

Hyatt/Moran moved that staff be provided direction to work together to work with Parks and Recreation Commission to develop a full pool of candidates and advance the top 3 in rank order to Council for consideration candidates Discussion: DuQuenne spoke in support of the motion and thanked City Manager Lessard. **Roll Call Vote: Jensen, DuQuenne, Seffinger, Moran, Graham and Hyatt: YES. Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Media Access to Executive Session

Public Input:

David Runkle – Ashland – Spoke that the city should not dismiss any media.

Carol Voisin – Ashland – Spoke regarding transparency and to obey State Law regarding media.

Dean Silver – Ashland – Spoke regarding being denied access of an Executive Session. He questioned why he was not allowed to attend the Executive Session. He spoke regarding transparency.

Bert Etling– Ashland – Spoke that he has been a reporter since 1982. He spoke to the importance of openness and transparency for civic issues.

Wes Brain – Ashland -Spoke that journalism is very important. He spoke that he has been a journalist for 27 years.

Mayor Akins went over ORS 192.660 regarding representatives of the news media being allowed in Executive Sessions and read a portion of a letter from The Society for Professional Journalists.

City Attorney Katrina Brown spoke gave an overview of what occurred on January 18, 2022.

She spoke that the City of Ashland does not have policy or criteria in regard to attendance of news media. She spoke that if Council chooses to do so Staff can look into defining what is news media.

Moran/Gina moved to direct Staff to make no changes in the present media protocol.

Discussion: Jensen spoke regarding the thoughts of Staff accusations. He spoke that was not the case. He spoke that this is not a solution looking for a problem. He spoke a simple policy could be put forth and will not support this motion. Graham spoke in agreement with free media and transparency. She spoke regarding the protocols for Executive Sessions. She spoke in agreement with Jensen of the dismay regarding City Staff deliberately taking away the rights of the citizens and it is clearly not true. Mayor Akins spoke that it is not the job for the Council to decide what news media is when the Oregon Revised Statute states it; and that the city should uphold this and not take further action. DuQuenne spoke in favor of leaving things as they are and to move forward. Hyatt spoke that it is not disputed that government must allow media entry into Executive Sessions. She spoke that issues happened on the 18th. She questioned if there needs to be a formal Ordinance or direct this to Staff for an internal procedure. Mayor Akins spoke that ultimately it is up to the Council. Jensen questioned what the City Manager thinks on this topic. Lessard spoke that there are three things that have to be balanced:

- State Law
- Protect Confidentiality
- Protect the City Councilors deliberative process.

He spoke that some guidance to balance all three of these items is important.

Graham spoke that the city does not have a clear process for news media. She suggested that we have framework that the new media is legitimate.

Moran/DuQuenne moved to call the question. Discussion: None. Roll Call Vote: Jensen, Seffinger, Graham and Hyatt: NO. Moran and DuQuenne: YES. Motion failed 2-4.

Council discussed what qualifies as news media.

Discussion on the main motion continued:

Hyatt spoke to provide guideposts for Staff in the future and spoke that this should be done internally and not be in the form of an Ordinance or a Resolution. Jensen spoke that he would not support this motion. He suggested to give Staff direction to get a process together. Graham clarified that nothing will be changed. She spoke that it is fair that the City Recorder admits any media in that asks.

Hyatt/Jensen moved to amend that we as a body do not proceed with a new Ordinance or Resolution but that we do provide Staff direction that when a request is made to attend Executive Session the individual provides name, phone number, email and affiliation if appropriate. Discussion: None. Roll Call Vote on the Amendment: Moran, Seffinger, DuQuenne, Jensen Graham and Hyatt: YES. Motion passed unanimously.

Main motion Roll Call Vote: DuQuenne, Seffinger, Moran, Jensen and Hyatt: YES. Councilor Graham: NO. Motion passed 5-1.

- 3. Look Ahead**
- 4. Adjournment**

Moran/Hyatt move to adjourn the Study Session. Discussion: None. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion passed unanimously.

The Council Study Session was adjourned at 7:46 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

City Recorder Melissa Huhtala

Attest:

Mayor Akins