



City Administrator's Report

Adam Hanks, Interim City Administrator

SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

The City Administrator's Report showcases current events facing the City externally and internally since the last Council meeting, while highlighting City accomplishments.

DISTRICT 5 DISCUSSION

As one significant follow-up to the Council's acceptance of the Cost Review Ad-Hoc Committee recommendations, Chief Shepherd began discussions with Fire District #5 Chief Hanley on the potential for Ashland Fire and Rescue to expand or enhance our existing operating mutual aid relationship.

These discussions have been very educational and resulted in the development of a concept framework document that Chief Hanley drafted to further the conversation.

There are a number of variations of intergovernmental agreement structures that could be pursued. Chief Hanley's concept framework provides an initial phased plan that both Chief Shepherd and I agreed with Chief Hanley's initial assessment of this being a good model to use for further discussion should Council direct staff to move beyond this exploration stage.

Chief Shepherd and I plan to present this concept framework to Council at the September 15th business meeting to get Council. With the pending retirement of Chief Shepherd, the timing seems right to invest further staff time on the potential for expanding the relationship and partnership between Ashland Fire and Rescue and Fire District #5.



UTILITY BILLING DISCONNECTION POLICY

The City of Ashland implemented a moratorium on utility service disconnections in March of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis impacts to local residents and businesses. This moratorium ensured that no customers would have either their electricity or water shut off due to non-payment of their bill.

After over three months, the moratorium was removed on July 1, 2020. This was done to re-instate several customer communication steps that did not occur with the moratorium, including the final and most successful communication tool that we implement, a personal knock on the door of the customer from our Electric Department staff.

Significant utility bill specific assistance funds were authorized at both the state and federal levels at the same time the moratorium was lifted. This provided the utility billing staff with tangible tools to assist customers struggling to pay their bills, many of which have had challenges prior to COVID.

The objective of our disconnection policies has been and still remains the establishment of communication with customers who otherwise do not respond to the multiple paper, electronic and phone system notifications of past due bills. The use of the additional door hanger and follow up personal visit to the service location is very effective in getting that communication channel going.

At any step in the billing process, the City's customer service staff in Utility Billing offers services including conservation audits, contact information for utility assistance providers (Access, United Way, St Vincent DePaul, etc.) and newly expanded payment programs that were implemented in May. The City has always been very flexible with payment plans, typically extending out three months. Customers can now select either 6 or 12 month plans to assist in managing their bills.

The City does not disconnect customers based on inability to pay, unless the customer refuses to communicate and collaborate in the development of a plan. Bryn Morrison, Interim Finance Director manages an experienced and helpful customer service team that is ready to assist and work with our customers in these challenging times.

ASHLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

In the wake of the George Floyd murder, Mayor Stromberg joined thousands of Mayors around the country in pledging to engage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as all other community members, in looking for ways to ensure that our police department best serves all community members, with a focus on how to better serve and build relationships with marginalized community members.

Part of the pledge called for the Ashland Police Department to conduct a four-stage review of its policies and practices. One of those stages calls for engaging the community to include a diverse range of input, exercises, and stories to include in the review. An online survey was available from July 22 to August 5, 2020 for the community to provide feedback on APD and policing issues.

Two hundred fifty-eight community members responded to the survey and provided valuable insight into how community members feel concerning their, and others' interaction with the Ashland Police Department. The report and full survey results are intended to serve as step three of the pledge, reporting back to the community on the feedback we have received and what the department intends to do with it.

The report and survey results can be found at:
<https://www.ashland.or.us/news.asp?newsID=4761>



LOOKING AHEAD

This is a draft of the next Council meetings agenda and is subject to change.

September 14 Study Session

- Financial Update

September 15 Business Meeting

- COVID-19 Emergency Declaration
- Annual Presentation by the Airport Commission
- Appointment of SDC Committee members for the Storm Drain Master Plan
- APRC Japanese Garden Contract Approval
- Approval of Contract for Selectron IVR Services
- Public Hearing and First Reading of Open Space Ordinance Amendment
- City Manager Recruitment Process and Job Description Discussion
- Oregon Worker Relief Fund Discussion
- Update on Pioneer Hall and the Community Center
- Draft Food and Beverage Ordinance

For the full look ahead and more details on the above items, go to [ashland.or.us/lookahead](https://www.ashland.or.us/lookahead).