

Council Communication

December 16, 2014, Business Meeting

A Resolution Establishing a Bee Sub-Committee and Consenting to the Requirements of Becoming Bee City USA Resolution

FROM:

Dave Kanner, city administrator, dave.kanner@ashland.or.us

SUMMARY

At the [October 20, 2014](#), study session, Council discussed a citizen request that the City of Ashland apply to become a Bee City USA. Bee City USA is a relatively new program, similar to the Tree City USA program, in which participating cities take various steps to recognize, protect and celebrate bees and other pollinators. As the citizens requesting Bee City USA status were also approaching the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Council determined that they were the more appropriate governing body to take on this proposal. Council further agreed that if the Parks and Recreation Commission agreed to take on the responsibilities of being a Bee City USA, the Council would support this decision by adopting a resolution.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

In June of 2012, the city of Asheville, North Carolina, decided to celebrate pollinators of all varieties and become the inaugural Bee City USA. In August of 2014, Talent, Oregon, followed suit and became the second Bee City USA. At the July 15, 2014, City Council meeting, Kristina Lefever and Laura Ferguson requested that Council consider applying for Ashland to become a Bee City USA. Council requested that this be placed on a Study Session agenda for discussion and consideration and this occurred on October 20, 2014. At that meeting it was determined that Parks and Recreation was better suited to fulfill the Bee City USA requirements, which include:

1. Fill out and submit the [Bee City USA application](#).
2. Establish a Bee City USA committee or subcommittee devoted to pollinator conservation
3. Approve a Bee City USA [resolution](#)
4. Hold an annual celebration of being a Bee City USA with a [proclamation](#) and public awareness programs
5. Publicly acknowledge the Bee City USA designation with signage in town and web links on the City of Ashland website
6. Annually submit a [renewal application](#) with a report on Bee City related activities

At the [November 24, 2014](#) Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission agreed to be the Bee City USA committee. This resolution confirms that the Council will support this decision and the Commission's work in becoming a Bee City USA.

COUNCIL GOALS SUPPORTED:

10. Support local micro-agriculture and food production.



FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Costs will include staff time to run the required Bee City USA committee or subcommittee, as well as costs to create and hang the required signage. It's possible other costs will be required, depending upon how the Parks and Recreation Commission handles the public awareness portion of the requirement.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUESTED ACTION:

N/A

SUGGESTED MOTION:

I move approval of the resolution titled, "A resolution establishing a bee sub-committee and consenting to the requirements of becoming a Bee City USA"

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Memo from November 24, 2014 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting

Minutes from [October 20, 2014 Council Meeting](#)



RESOLUTION NO. 2014-_____

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A BEE SUB-COMMITTEE AND
CONSENTING TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF BECOMING
A BEE CITY USA**

RECITALS:

- A. The goal of *BEE CITY USA* is to promote healthy, sustainable habitats and communities for bees and other pollinators;
- B. Thanks to the tremendous diversity of wild native bees, along with the honey bees that were brought here from Europe in the 1600s, we have very diverse dietary choices rich in fruits, nuts and vegetables: *“One in every three bites of food we eat is courtesy of insect pollination. Even our meat and milk trace back to insects that pollinate the alfalfa and other feed for beef cattle and cows”* (Mace Vaughan, Pollinator Program Director for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation);
- C. Bees and other pollinators around the globe have experienced dramatic declines due to a combination of habitat loss, use of pesticides, and the spread of pests and diseases, with grave implications for the future health of flora and fauna;
- D. Cities and their residents have the opportunity to support bees and other pollinators on both public and private land;
- E. Supporting pollinators fosters environmental awareness and sustainability, and increases interactions among community stewards such as commercial and backyard beekeepers, farmers, children, educators, Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, plant nurseries, municipalities, neighborhoods, and garden suppliers and clubs;
- F. The economic benefits of (native and honey) bee-friendliness are:
 - 1. Healthy ecosystems--insect pollinators are required for pollination and reproduction of about 85% of flowering plants globally, plants that: 1) are vital for clean air and water; 2) provide food, fiber and shelter for people and wildlife; and 3) support the very insects that pollinate our crops and form the basis of food webs.
 - 2. Increased vegetable and fruit crop yields due to bee pollination.
 - 3. Increased habitat for natural enemies of crop pests and therefore reduced need for and costs associated with pesticides.
 - 4. Increased demand for pollinator-friendly plant materials from local nurseries and growers.
 - 5. Income earned by beekeepers and others through the sale of bee products, beekeeping equipment and supplies, and hive rentals for pollination; and, heightened prestige and premium asking prices for place-based honey, which enhances the visibility and reputation of its community of origin
- G. Designating Ashland, Oregon as a *BEE CITY USA* affiliate would:
 - 1. Honor and emphasize Ashland’s rich agricultural history and present;
 - 2. Benefit local businesses that depend on pollinators;

3. Celebrate our cultural identity as a community that values sustainable practices;
4. Contribute to tourism in the region
5. Improve food security and health by supporting local food sources; and,
6. Encourage local collaboration on projects that promote environmental education and sustainable practices.

H. Pollinator-friendly habitats provide the following benefits:

1. Diverse and abundant nectar and pollen from plants blooming in succession.
2. Clean water for drinking, nest-building, cooling, diluting stored honey, and butterfly puddling.
3. Pesticide-free community or pesticide use carried out with least ill effects on pollinators.
4. Comprised of mostly, if not all, native species of annual and perennial wildflowers, shrubs, trees, and grasses because many native pollinators prefer or depend on the native plants with which they co-evolved.
5. Where possible, designated pollinator zones in public spaces with signage to educate the public and build awareness.
6. Safe and humane removal of bees when required.
7. Undisturbed spaces (leaf and brush piles, un-mowed fields or field margins, fallen trees and other dead wood) for nesting and overwintering for native pollinators; and

THE CITY OF ASHLAND RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

- A. In order to enhance understanding among municipal staff and the public about the vital role that pollinators play and what each of us can do to sustain them, the City of Ashland agrees to meet the following standards required of all *BEE CITY USA* affiliates:
- B. Establish/maintain the **Bee City USA Sub-committee** as a sub-committee of Ashland Parks and Recreation, comprised of one Parks and Recreation Commissioner and three citizens and staffed by employees, charged with assembling and disseminating information on topics of pollinator-friendly habitat and policies to municipal departments, residents, businesses, and developers.
- C. Pass this *BEE CITY USA* **resolution** (which articulates these standards).
- D. **Publicly acknowledge** the community's commitment by agreeing to a) install/maintain at least one authorized *BEE CITY USA* street sign in a prominent location, and b) create/maintain links on appropriate pages of the municipal website which includes the municipality's *BEE CITY USA* liaison(s), links to a PDF of this signed Resolution and the *BEE CITY USA* website, and summaries of the pollinator-friendly activities the municipality has undertaken or accomplished the previous year(s).
- E. Commit to **annually celebrate** National Pollinator Week (third full week of June) or some other appropriate occasion through events, proclamations, and promotions that showcase the municipality's commitment to being a *BEE CITY USA* affiliate.
- F. Commit to annually **apply for renewal** of the community's designation and submit a report of *BEE CITY USA* activities following the format provided.

This resolution was duly PASSED and ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2014, and takes effect upon signing by the Mayor.

Barbara Christensen, City Recorder

SIGNED and APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2014.

John Stromberg, Mayor

Reviewed as to form:

David H. Lohman, City Attorney

ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

340 S. PIONEER STREET • ASHLAND, OREGON 97520

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MEMORANDUM

TO : Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM : Michael Black, Director

DATE : November 19, 2014

SUBJECT : Bee City USA Resolution and Application

Background

Recently the City Council asked the Ashland Parks Commission to review the benefits of becoming a Bee City USA. The Council asked the Commission to make a recommendation on whether or not the City would benefit from becoming a Bee City USA city. After the October study meeting of the Parks Commission, it was decided to move forward and make a recommendation to Council to become a Bee City USA.

Becoming a Bee City USA would accomplish the following, according to the proposed Bee City USA Resolution:

1. Honor and emphasize Ashland's rich agricultural history and present;
2. Benefit local businesses that depend on pollinators;
3. Celebrate our cultural identity as a community that values sustainable practices;
4. Contribute to tourism in the region
5. Improve food security and health by supporting local food sources; and,
6. Encourage local collaboration on projects that promote environmental education and sustainable practices.

By adopting the program, the City of Ashland would agree to meet the following standards:

1. Establish/maintain a subcommittee of an appropriate municipal body or department, comprised of citizens and staffed by employees, charged with assembling and disseminating information on topics of pollinator-friendly habitat and policies to municipal departments, residents, businesses, and developers. For example, it might be a subcommittee of the Sustainability, Natural Resources, or Tree Commission.
2. Pass this BEE CITY USA resolution (which articulates these standards).
3. Publicly acknowledge the community's commitment by agreeing to a) install/maintain at least one authorized BEE CITY USA street sign in a prominent location, and b) create/maintain links on appropriate pages of the municipal website which includes the municipality's BEE CITY USA liaison(s), links to a PDF of this signed Resolution and the BEE CITY USA website, and summaries of the pollinator-friendly activities the municipality has undertaken or accomplished the previous year(s).
4. Commit to annually celebrate National Pollinator Week (third full week of June) or some other appropriate occasion through events, proclamations, and promotions that showcase the municipality's commitment to being a BEE CITY USA affiliate.
5. Commit to annually apply for renewal of the community's designation and submit a report of BEE CITY USA activities following the format provided.

Recommendations:

1. That the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission creates a "Bee Subcommittee" with responsibility to "assemble and disseminate information on topics of pollinator-friendly habitat and policies to municipal departments, residents, businesses, and developers."
 - a. It is recommended that the Bee Subcommittee be a component of the operations of Ashland Parks and Recreation reporting to the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission, and that it consist of at least the following members:
 - i. One (1) Parks and Recreation Commissioner (commission liaison);
 - ii. Three (3) members of the public with expertise or interest in pollinators, pollinator policy or pollinator education;
 - iii. One (1) Parks and Recreation staff member (staff liaison)
2. That the Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council supporting the approval of the attached Bee City USA Resolution and the implementation of the requirements of the resolution which are outlined above.

**MINUTES FOR THE STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
Monday, October 20, 2014
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way**

Mayor Stromberg called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room.

Councilor Rosenthal, Morris, Slattery, Voisin, Lemhouse, and Marsh were present.

1. Public Input

John Ames/818 Palmer/Proposed an amendment to the sign code that created a new subsection 18.96.020.27(a) Decoration and read it aloud from a document he submitted into the record.

Roy Laird/419 Willow/Supported Mr. Ames' testimony and the proposed amendment as it would provide a practical and viable solution to the small wall graphic at the Ashland Book Exchange. He did not think it was the government's job to regulate artistic expression. The public was strongly against removing the mural and did not understand why the City required its removal.

Jacque Milikien/609 Oak Knoll Drive/Spoke on the decline of Monarch butterflies. Experts estimated a 90% decline in Monarch butterflies on the west coast over the past decade due to the loss of milkweed habitat through development and removal. She planted milkweed successfully and recently the last of 22 Monarch butterflies flew south. It proved that individuals could make a difference. Designating Ashland as a Bee City USA would help preserve these creatures.

Peter Schroeder/572 Ray Lane/Urged Council to support Bee City USA. Becoming a Bee City USA would join place Ashland in the forefront of modern and responsible movement and send a message that Ashland was devoted to preserving the integrity of the environment for humans and bees. As an Entomologist at Southern Oregon University, he noticed firsthand the decline of bumblebees in the region, particularly the western bumblebee, and the very likely extinction of Franklin's bumblebee. Ashland becoming a Bee City USA would not reverse the decline but would help address the awareness and resolve of future Bee City USA cities across the nation to address the real problems bees and pollinators faced.

Nancy Appling/684 Liberty Street/Explained her background as a master gardener, volunteer at North Mountain Park and described the pollinator gardens at the park and her experience with her own garden the yielded little due to pollination issues. She suggested a pollinator corridor that started with Ashland and went through the Rogue Valley.

Dolly Warden/255 Colvert Road/Explained she was a beekeeper and member of Together for Talent as well as the Pollinator Project of Rogue Valley. She encouraged Council to join Bee City USA and help create a pollinator corridor from city to city so children would have the food they needed in the future. Every third bite taken was due to a pollinator. China currently had people brushing pollination dust onto fruit tree blossoms because of pollinator decline.

Laura Ferguson/2253 Hwy 99 North/Explained she was an educator and had a business called the College of Melissa, Center for Sacred Beekeeping and studied bees from historical and scientific perspectives as well as the mythological and spiritual aspects of bees. Pollinators existed in the world for 200,000,000 years and created the world through co-evolution with flowers. Pollinators were the keystone and lynchpin species, everything above and below them will fail if removed. All pollinators needed support and protection.

Kristine LeFever/2359 Blue Sky Lane/Looked forward to working with the City and Parks as a Bee City USA. Ashland was more than half way there with the parks system, lists of native drought tolerant, and pollinator friendly plants on the City website, the bee ordinance, and committed citizens. She was excited that Ashland would be the next Bee City USA.

Sharon Schmidt/601 South Pacific, Phoenix/Explained she was organizing the Oregon Honey Festival that would occur November 15, 2014 at the Ashland Springs Hotel. She supported previous testimony and hoped Ashland would adopt the Bee City USA status.

2. Look Ahead review

City Administrator Dave Kanner reviewed items on the Look Ahead.

3. Discussion regarding Bee City USA Proposal

City Administrator Dave Kanner explained Bee City USA consideration involved Council adopting a resolution, designating a committee to oversee Bee City activities, hosting an annual celebration, and hanging a Bee City USA sign. The people interested in Bee City USA also approached the Parks Commission about overseeing the committee and were meeting with the Parks Commission following the Study Session. Council could wait and see if the Parks Commission was willing to take on the requirements of Bee City USA and support them by adopting the resolution. The group also reached out to the Conservation Commission and the Commission did see themselves as the appropriate body to head up the Bee City USA committee.

If the Parks Commission agreed to serve in this capacity, Council would support them by adopting the resolution. Mayor Stromberg added Council could take further steps in terms of ordinances to protect and encourage pollinators.

4. Review and discussion of self-insurance for health benefits

City Administrator Dave Kanner introduced Jeff Jones and Nancy Louris, health benefit consultants from J.L. Jones & Associates who were available to answer questions. Mr. Kanner explained how self-insurance worked administratively. It started with a budget for health benefits and a plan that matched available dollars. The City adopted a plan document that detailed benefits, deductibles, out of pocket expenses and coverage. The City then paid claims directly through a third party administrator (TPA) that had access to a separate account the City used to pay claims. Self-insurance eliminated profit from the plan. The City purchased two types of stop loss insurance, individual stop loss, and aggregate stop loss. They based the plan on the last plan from Pacific Source. The City set up an Employee Health Benefits Advisory Committee (EHBAC) composed of representatives from each bargaining unit that met every other month to look at trends, and discuss issues employees may have with the TPA. This year EHBAC reviewed suggestions from employees but ended up rejecting them all due to expense making only one change required by the Affordable Care Act.

Council's role in self-insurance was establishing the budget for the insurance. Additionally Council was not personally liable.

The first year the plan encountered a severe loss ratio of 89% while the first 3 months of this year the loss ratio was 60%. Claims were unpredictable and it was typical to have bad years. If the City did not finish this fiscal year with enough money to repay the loan, they would have to raise the premiums. Mr. Kanner addressed a claim denied twice that resulted in revising the claims appeal process. The second step for appeals was now the City Administrator. If an employee felt uncomfortable discussing the appeal with the City Administrator, the City would hire a hearings officer. By law, an Independent Review Officer (IRO) made the final decision regarding an appeal.

The City needed a three-five year track record before exploring traditional lines outside the healthcare industry or joining other local self-insured organizations.

Councilor Voisin suggested a Council committee that would oversee EHBAC.

Mr. Kanner noted the City had saved \$1,000,000 from moving to self-insurance. At the start of fiscal year 2014, staff budgeted \$4,000,000 for health benefits that stayed flat for the current fiscal year. Staff was unsure what would have happened if the City stayed with Pacific Source but the average increase for CIS customers 13.5%. That would have made the City's premium \$5,000,000 and instead it was \$4,000,000.

Council majority did not support forming an oversight committee for EHBAC.

5. Discussion of wall graphics

Community Developer Director Bill Molnar provided background on the wall graphics that was set in the early 1980s creating the foundation for the current sign code. He noted the limited enforcement regarding murals on buildings. In 2008, artistic expression came into question and the Public Arts Commission created a venue for that. The sign code contained a wall sign category that allowed a mounted sign instead of painting the building itself.

Public Arts Commissioner Dana Bussell explained the revised sign code in 2008 classified content as speech, in accordance with the first amendment whether it was imagery or verbiage. She addressed historic buildings and confirmed if a building was on the national register the Public Arts Commission could not paint on the building.

City Administrator Dave Kanner commented the original intent of the code was to prevent owners of buildings from turning blank walls into advertisement. Ashland prohibited images unless declared as public art through the public art process. Questioning mounting a sign instead of painting a wall could be up for discussion. The City had a legitimate public interest in regulating the size of signs allowed on buildings and the treatment of building walls to maintain the integrity of the downtown area.

Mr. Molnar explained a provision in the code that addressed a timeline for coming into compliance regarding signs. Another part of the code that considered prohibited signs a nuisance, including wall graphics and required removal were also subject to grandfathering. An historic sign inventory provision saved certain signs. A prohibited sign was nonconformity until the time of a building permit or something that involved a land use action either brought the sign into compliance or added it to the historic register.

City Attorney Dave Lohman further explained grandfathering referred to the enactment of a new ordinance that allowed things already in place to remain. Passing an ordinance that retroactively allowed things the prior ordinance prohibited went against the first amendment. Removing the prohibition on wall graphics from the current ordinance would apply to past and future and create first amendment issues if the City decided to reinstate the prohibition later.

The five-year easement requirement for murals gave the City control and responsibility of that part of the property in case the owner let it deteriorate. At the end of the five years, either the owner went through the Public Art process again or the mural was no longer public art because the public no longer had ownership.

Mr. Molnar was aware of one community that allowed wall graphics as a type of sign but did not allow them on building facades included in the national register or contributing.

Commissioner Bussell responded to a question on what the Public Arts Commission might have decided had the building owner gone through the process to make the small mural at the Ashland Book Exchange public art. She would not speak for the Commission and shared her personal opinion. The owner had drilled through part of the graphic to install an awning and that had created some damage. It was several years old and she was not aware of the condition. The composition was different because it was painted two different times. Her idea was cut out that section of the wall, display the mural in another place, and patch the wall.

Mr. Lohman explained changing the definition of decoration and adding language to the prohibition section of the ordinance that no wall graphic was permitted except for decorations exempted under the definition of decorations would allow decorations in the signage area. Council could also allow a percentage of the signage area for decorations. He distributed a possible definition of decoration proposed by Mr. Laird that both Mr. Lohman and Mr. Molnar altered. He submitted the document into the record.

Mr. Molnar commented staff generally had a chronology of attempts at enforcement so at the time the business changed, the City required the owner to meet the code.

Council noted the Public Arts Commission had draft mural guidelines and suggested having them bring it to Council for review. Other suggestions would amend the sign ordinance to allow painting signs on walls and include decorations with the signage while retaining historic considerations.

Council supported the Public Arts Commission bringing their draft mural guidelines to a future Council meeting. Council would review an ordinance that allowed painting signs on building walls for possible consideration. Council directed staff to bring a definition of decoration within the current limitations of the signage code.

Council comment did not want historic building policy to change due to the change in the ordinance. Other comments did not want to restrict sign size while opposing comment wanted to retain size limitations. Staff clarified the City had a local historic building inventory that included contributing buildings with high historic value in addition to the national registry. Additional Council comment supported further review of small wall graphics but did not think the issue demanded the attention it was receiving.

Council directed staff not to undertake enforcement on any existing graphics until the issue was resolved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Smith
Assistant to the City Recorder