

Public Input #1

Mayor and Council,

I am directing my comments to the Administrator Report as it seems most appropriate.

I'd like to thank the Mayor and Council for the efforts made to pass the City Hall Bond. I believe the Mayor and Council made the correct decisions by working to protect the historic structure and including the Community Center and Pioneer Hall in the Bond Measure.

Obviously, many factors played into the voters rejection of providing funding for these much needed projects. I believe, however, taxpayer exhaustion and a critique of Council budget decisions played a critical role in both the failure of the Bond Measure and success of the City Charter change.

Obviously, the most glaring example has been the substantial growth in the Police Department and the Parks and Recreation programs that have suffered as a result. When I talked to the public and worked to support the Bond Measure, I found it difficult to defend the city against claims of irresponsible spending. The fact that the Council moved to hire addition police officers without a revenue source was fiscally reckless and cannot be defended. Finally, funding these General Fund services through regressive utility fees placed the burden onto those who are already financially stressed, seniors on fixed incomes and low income renters. It is not unsurprising that the voters rejected this Bond Measure and want to see change in their City Charter.

Again, I am disappointed to see how little is being done to prepare for the revenue shortfalls that are coming. Having been on the Council during the 2007 financial collapse, I saw our Administrator, Martha Bennett, act swiftly to address the risks by bringing proposed cuts to the Council for approval. Her experience guided the Council toward decisions that limited risks and long-term impacts.

The growth of police budgets is a phenomenon that has taken place in cities across America and has much to do with the current unrest. As economic disparity has increased, cities have attempted to deal with social problems associated with poverty through Increased policing. Budget limitations have resulted in cuts to social programs, parks programs, and other beneficial services that create a healthy community. Police are the wrong tool to address issues of poverty like homelessness.

It is time to move forward in Ashland and respond to budget shortfalls and reorient our spending to address community needs.

Respectfully,
Eric Navickas

Public Input #2

Howdy Mayor and Council,

Thanks for the hard work – tough times – stay safe – don't touch your face - etc.

I am suggesting that City Council, in every meeting, verbally acknowledge that Public Forum is now e-mail only. And verbally confirm that those e-mails were read by every council member. And verbally reiterate that submitted e-mails will be available online when the minutes are released. (Along those lines, making those minutes and submissions easier to find on the website would be fantastic.)

I believe that the Public Forum portion of all local meetings is most valuable for the occasional participant in our civic process. No matter how petty or futile a grievance may be, or how impossible a request is, citizens need to know that there is an all-American "Town Hall" forum available to them. There is value in just knowing that there continues to be an opportunity to speak to the entire community about any issue a person feels is important.

Professional weirdoes like me and Huelz will always find a way to send you all a bizarre and snarky note, but for the majority of the city, the Public Forum is the last, best opportunity to say one's piece and make a grand proclamation.

Please make sure that this opportunity is not lost, and reassure the community that the council is committed to keeping the "Public" in Public Forum and working to reestablish live testimony.

Thanks again and Zoom on!

Jim Falkenstein

Ashland

Public Input #3

Mayor Stromberg and City Council Members,

I have been the supervising physician and medical director for about 20 EMS agencies and ambulance services in Jackson County over the past 30 years, including 30 years for Ashland Fire & Rescue (in the early years before providing ambulance service it was known as Ashland Fire Department) and 18 years for Mercy Flights. I have been intimately involved in EMS medical direction locally and throughout Oregon during that time, including revising and editing the county's Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan.

The question of whether or not Ashland Fire & Rescue (AF&R) should continue providing ambulance service to Jackson County Ambulance Service Area (ASA) 3, including the citizens of Ashland, as it have been doing for about 25 years, is controversial and challenging. This 25 year history should not be ended without significant research, thought and deliberation which I do not believe is possible to complete by July 1, 2020, the deadline to request a 3 year extension of the ASA assignment - less than a month away.

As I understand the 2005 Amended Jackson County Ambulance Service Plan, in the Jackson County Codified Ordinances Chapter 1075, the county will make public notice in early July 2020 that AF&R's 5 year ASA assignment ends December 31, 2020. Any parties interested in applying for the ASA 3 assignment, including AF&R, must then make a full application and the county will award one of the applicants the ASA assignment for 5 years.

If AF&R applies for a 3 year extension by July 1, 2020 and there are no other applicants, a formal application would not be required and the county may extend AF&R's ASA 3 assignment for 3 years, which will give ample time for the City of Ashland to adequately study and deliberate on the merits of continuing to provide ambulance service.

If AF&R does not ask for an extension, to be considered for the ambulance service it would need to submit a full application along with any other applicants.

It seems to me that a month is too short a time to decide to end the ambulance service thus I think that AF&R should apply for a 3 year extension (a simpler and less expensive process), rather than a 5 year assignment.

I believe that a quantitative (primarily financial) evaluation of the ambulance service is not likely to provide a definitive answer to what the ambulance service truly costs. I think that the qualitative aspects of the ambulance service, which are more difficult to determine, will end up being the deciding factor on whether or not the City of Ashland should continue in the long term to maintain the ASA 3 assignment.

I encourage you to have Ashland Fire & Rescue apply for the 3 year ASA extension by the July 1, 2020 deadline.

Thank you for your consideration and your work on behalf of the citizens of Ashland.

Paul

