

The citizen's source of information about the City of Ashland

COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPACTS TO CITY BUDGET

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began and many suffered from shut downs and loss of employment, the City has been reviewing its financial position and preparing for the repercussions from this pandemic. The primary objectives of this review and cost cutting plan include:

- Address revenue shortfalls while minimizing service level reductions
- Preserve investments made in existing workforce
- Prioritize reductions that can be sustained into the next budget cycle.

Revenue shortfalls are projected in the two taxes most connected to the tourism industry, Food and Beverage Tax and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), as a result of State mandated stay at home measures and temporary businesses closures.

The Food and Beverage Tax is estimated to have a \$3 million shortfall for budget biennium (BN) 2019-2021, a 50 percent reduction from the pre-COVID-19 budget forecast of just over \$6 million. Food and Beverage Tax revenues were approved by Ashland voters to fund Parks and Recreation (General Fund), Wastewater, and Streets. Capital projects in each of these areas will be delayed or downsized to address this shortfall as well as staffing cost reductions in both Parks and Streets.

The Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) is also estimated to have a \$3 million shortfall for BN 2019-2021; a 50 percent reduction from the pre-COVID-19 budget forecast which equals 5 percent of total General Fund Revenues. It is important to note that cost reductions need to occur in the same place as the lost revenues. State law restricts the use of revenue from one area (called Funds) of the City budget to pay for expenses in another area or Fund.

As a result the following personnel and capital projects reductions have been made:

- Existing senior management level vacant positions will remain open, including the Assistant City Administrator, Deputy Public Works Director. In addition, funding for the Deputy Fire Chief, IT Director, and Management Analyst positions were already eliminated during the most recent budget approval process.
- Capital projects for Streets and Parks have been delayed.
- Layoffs & Reductions
 - Parks and Recreation (General Fund) laid off six employees (three from Recreation and three from Parks) on April 14, 2020. Parks and Recreation also furloughed all staff one day each month.

Continued on page 2...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Financial Impacts (cont.)	1-2	Connect with Us	3
Energy Assistance Program	2	Events	4
Eviction Moratorium	2	Volunteer in Parks	4
Ashland Summer Celebration	2-3	APRC Playguide	4
Water Conservation	3	City Calendar	4

STAY UPDATED ON CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

To help ease concern over the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and spread correct information, the City has created a webpage ashland.or.us/coronavirus and will be updating a hotline (541) 552-2490 with the most up-to-date information from the Federal, State, County, and City governments.

The webpage includes information on:

Prevention and Health—links to the CDC, Oregon Health Authority, and Jackson County Health and Human Services.

City Government Updates—including current City closures and cancellation notices.

Current Restrictions—offering a timeline of the Governor's orders including mandated closures.

Local & Business Resources—where affected businesses can go for help and how you can support local businesses.



COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPACTS TO CITY BUDGET

(continued from page 1)

- Layoffs & Reductions (continued)
 - There are Police (General Fund) and Public Works (Enterprise Fund) positions that will remain unfilled.
 - No temporary cadets or park patrol officers were hired for the summer season by the Ashland Police Department (General Fund).
 - Full time positions have been reduced to less than full time in the Legal, Fire, and Community Development.
- Other Personnel Cost Reductions
 - Cost of living increases were not granted for all non-union administrative and technical staff; accounting for over one-third of the workforce.
 - Ashland Fire Union voluntarily delayed their cost of living increase until January 2021.
 - Ashland Fire and & Rescue is monitoring and adjusting shift staffing levels to reach COVID-19 specific targeted salary cost reductions.

Due to immediate and comprehensive financial tracking of all COVID-19 related expenses, the City received over \$430,000 in Federal reimbursements for direct costs associated with the pandemic. The City is continuing to advocate for federal funding opportunities (including grants for capital projects), expansion of TOT use, and restructuring debt. Staff has presented Council with three financial updates since March. Those updates can be found at [ashland.or.us/covid19financials](https://www.ashland.or.us/covid19financials). These financial updates are a great way to get accurate information and stay informed on the City's efforts to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 financial impact. Future updates will be given to Council as our financial picture changes.

Sign up for emails on the agendas and minutes at the bottom of our homepage ([ashland.or.us](https://www.ashland.or.us)). For more detailed instructions on how to subscribe or edit your subscription, go to [ashland.or.us/connect](https://www.ashland.or.us/connect).

LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The joint Legislative Emergency Board directed \$15 million in utility assistance to Oregon Housing and Community Services to be delivered through Community Action Agencies to qualifying low income Oregonians. The intended use of these funds is "to help prevent, prepare for, or respond to the coronavirus".

These funds are separate from the regular Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) grant as well as the LP20-CARES funds and will be administered locally by ACCESS. To see if you qualify for this utility assistance, contact ACCESS at (541) 779-6691 or by visiting www.accesshelps.org.

STATE OF OREGON COVID-19 EVICTION MORATORIUM

On June 26, 2020, the legislature passed [HB 4213](#) to protect tenants from being evicted or charged late fees on unpaid rent until October 1, 2020. After October 1, 2020 only evictions and notice of terminations can be issued for reasons other than rent not being paid during the eviction moratorium (April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020). Tenants will have until March 31, 2021 to pay back any rent not paid during April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020. However, starting October 1, 2020 landlords can give notice asking the tenant if they plan to use this six month grace period for paying back rent. Tenants must reply within 14 days to the landlord otherwise the landlord can charge half a month's rent as a penalty. If the tenant indicates they will use the grace period, but fails to pay back rent by March 31, 2021, the landlord can start the eviction process on April 1, 2021.

If a landlord is in violation, a tenant can get a court order allowing them to move back into their home and sue the landlord for three months' rent. Tenants can use the following resources if the landlord is in violation:

- Write to the landlord that they are violating the law;
- Contact the [Oregon Law Center or Legal Aid Services of Oregon](#);
- Contact the [Community Alliance of Tenants](#); and/or,
- Contact the [Oregon State Bar's lawyer referral service](#).

Go to <https://oregonlawhelp.org/classroom/public-health-and-coronavirus-covid-19/housing-protections/evictions-update-for-oregon-during-covid-19-emergency> for further details on the new law, FAQs, and a sample letter tenants using the grace period can send to their landlords.

ASHLAND SUMMER CELEBRATION

Partnering with the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, the City of Ashland is proud to support our community and businesses during the planned Ashland Summer Celebration (go to [ashlandchamber.com](https://www.ashlandchamber.com) for more information). We want to emphasize that public health and safety is the most important part of reopening. *Continued on page 3...*

City offices will be closed on September 7, 2020 in observance of Labor Day. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Check out how Ashland connects at www.ashlandfiber.net



EVENTS

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures in place, many of our events may need to be canceled or postponed.

Fall Prevention: Stay Healthy & On Your Feet

Balance, strength and overall health can change as you age, putting you at risk for falling. Providence Health and Service experts will offer a free virtual class to help you or a loved one stay as healthy as possible and on your feet. There will also be a pharmacist presentation, information about falls while staying home during the pandemic, and a short introduction to Tai Chi. Register for your choice of date by calling 1 (800) 562-8964.

DATES & TIMES September 16, 1 to 3pm
September 22, 10am to 12pm
September 24, 11am to 1pm

COST Free

VOLUNTEER IN PARKS (VIP) WITH APRC

Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) is in need of volunteers! They have many ways for you to get involved.

- You can work independently or join a small group of volunteers to help beautify and care for our parks.
- Many of APRC's recreation programs will be taught virtually this fall and they are seeking tech savvy volunteers to help support these offerings. Are you comfortable with platforms such as Zoom, or other video conferencing platforms? If so, please reach out soon!
- Or maybe at this time you are more interested in helping fellow community members during COVID-19? APRC and the City of Ashland partner with Adopt a Neighbor Ashland to pair volunteers with their more high-risk neighbors for shopping and errands. Visit adoptneighbor.org to volunteer!
- In addition, the Senior Services Division of APRC has partner agencies that are seeking volunteers to help deliver food to seniors and provide rides to medical appointments.

All of these volunteer opportunities are flexible and some meet critical needs during the pandemic. If you are interested, please contact Sulaiman Shelton, Volunteer Coordinator for APRC at (541) 552-2264 or sulaiman.shelton@ashland.or.us.

APRC 2020 COMMUNITY PLAYGUIDE... "WHAT TO DO!"

The 2020 Summer Community PlayGuide, "What to Do," will offer recreation programming through the end of August. The 2020 Fall Community PlayGuide will be available the end of September and will offer classes October 1 through mid-December. For now, classes will be taught outdoors or virtually. Visit AshlandParksandRec.org to view the PlayGuides. Also, view the public health guidelines related to COVID-19 and the requirements for each program. The guidelines are mandated by the Oregon Health Authority. The goal of APRC is to adhere to these guidelines to keep patrons and staff safe.

During this time, APRC has worked hard to stay connected with you! Please take a moment to check out the Find Your Space Campaign, especially the Fun Space category for ways to stay engaged. More at ashland.or.us/FindYourSpace.

SEPTEMBER CITY CALENDAR

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures in place, many meetings might be canceled or held electronically. Please check ashland.or.us/calendar.asp for updates.

City Council

Business Meeting: Sept. 1 & 15 | 6 p.m.
Study Sessions: Aug. 31 & Sept. 14 | 5:30 p.m.

Airport Commission

September 1 | 9:30 a.m.

Conservation & Climate Outreach Commission

September 23 | 6 p.m.

Climate Policy Commission

September 10 | 4 p.m.

Forest Lands Commission

September 8 | 5:30 p.m.

Fire Station #2, 1860 Ashland Street

Historic Commission

September 2 | 6 p.m.

Housing and Human Services Commission

September 24 | 4 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Commission

Business Meeting: September 9 | 6:30 p.m.

Study Session: September 2 | 6:30 p.m.

Planning Commission

Business Meeting: September 8 | 7 p.m.

Study Session: September 22 | 7 p.m.

Public Art Commission

September 18 | 8:30 a.m.

Transportation Commission

September 17 | 6 p.m.

Tree Commission

September 3 | 6 p.m.

Wildfire Safety Commission

September 16 | 11 a.m.

Fire Station #1, 455 Siskiyou Boulevard

▲ TTY 1-800-735-2900 ▲ Meetings are held in the Council Chambers (1175 E Main Street) or the Siskiyou Room (51 Winburn Way) unless otherwise noted. ▲ City Council and many other City meetings are broadcast live on channel 9. Charter Communications customers will find city meetings on channels 180 and 181. Meetings also stream live on the internet at rvtv.sou.edu, select channel RVTV Prime.



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