

9 March 2021

To: Mayor, Julie Akins, City of Ashland

Councilors: Paula Hyatt

Tonya Graham

Shaun Moran

~~Stephanie Seffinger~~

Gina DuQuenne

Stephen Jensen

Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners:

Julian Bell

Michael Black (Director)

Leslie Eldridge

Mike Gardiner

Rick Landt

Jim Lewis

Citizens Budget Committee:

Jim Bachman

Shane Hunter

Bob Kaplan

Mike Morris

Dear Mayor, Councilors, Commissioners and Committee Members:

I am sure we can all agree on the tremendous value of Ashland's parks to our community. That has only been reinforced during this past year when being out of doors, in nature, had even greater benefits to our health and sanity.

With this in mind, I am asking you to consider the children in our community who have been "learning" primarily in doors, in front of computer screens this past year. At this time there is increased importance for them to have the opportunity for outdoor play, exposure to nature and outdoor education. North Mountain Park offers opportunity for exposure to nature with outdoor play. But the outdoor education component can not happen without the Nature Center being properly funded, physically open and with appropriate staffing.

In current and future planning for Ashland Parks, in both the short and long term, I urge you to give serious thought to and support for North Mountain Park in general, and specifically to the Outdoor Education Program. The community of Ashland can not afford, nor should we accept, the long term closure of the Nature Center and the absence of the Outdoor Education Program.

Sincerely,

Patricia Smith

Patricia Smith



cc: Ashland Tidings

[REDACTED]

From: Susan Sullivan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 8:45 PM
To: Budget Committee
Cc: Libby VanWyhe; Jennifer Aguayo
Subject: Elementary Science Field Trip Program
Attachments: Ashland Budget Committee 2-24-21.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

To the Ashland Budget Committee,

I am asking for further consideration regarding the Parks and Recreation Budget and the loss of one of the most valuable programs and teaching tools in Ashland, the Elementary Science Field Trip Program.

I ask that you read the attached document where information about this program is outlined and my wish to submit my testimony. Please reconsider your final budget decisions and the implications of this loss to our city's educational resources.

Thank you,

Susan Sullivan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 10:35 AM
To: Finance
Subject: Finance recommendedations

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Here's a fantastic recommendation that I know many support.

Lower the police budget and stop trying to make up for deficits by fining townspeople for petty crime (3mph speeding fines, jay walking, etc) most of the people I know despise the police in this town for the very reason that they are after petty crime. I know that I speak for the a lot of townspeople and I ask that you seriously think about what this does for future generations. I am 30 years old, just purchased property in town and pay taxes, after one year it reminds me of being back in my conservative North Carolina home town where the 'good ol' boy' police officers have absolutely zero crime and harrass people who just don't deserve to be harrassed. I would love to feel like my voice is heard without having to have political involvement. If you want people to hate the police and your township you are already well on your way. It's not too late, the local economy is already in poor shape so why steal from people by enforcing such petty crime.

Thanks for taking the time to read this rant,

I care deeply about this town and community and want to see it thrive in a positive way as opposed to the current mode of mismanagement.



Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

[REDACTED]

From: Dennis Jeske [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 10:38 AM
To: Finance
Subject: Proposed Budget Copy

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello,

My name is Dennis Jeske and I'm writing to see how the budget process for 2021/2022 set to begin on March 30th is handled.

Is there a draft budget? If so can I have a copy?

If not do you start with last year's budget as a strawperson and launch the new budget from there?

Are there still vacancies on the budget committee and if so can I still apply?

What will be handled as the part of the first meeting on the 30th?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dennis Jeske
[REDACTED]

From: Melanie Purcell
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 6:14 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Natalie Thomason; Adam Hanks; Bryn Morrison
Subject: Proposed Budget Copy

Good afternoon Mr. Jeske,

Thank you for reaching out regarding the City of Ashland budget. Staff is currently preparing the BN2021-23 City Manager's Recommended Budget which will be presented to the Ashland Citizens Budget Committee at its first meeting on March 30, 2021. The meeting will be at 3 p.m. via Zoom and broadcast on RVTV. We plan to have the budget distributed electronically to the budget committee members the week prior and will post on the City's website within a day of distribution.

While we do use the prior budget as context and some baseline information, given the drastic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the change in staff city-wide, we are working from a more programmatic viewpoint. Specifically, departments are looking at which services are mandated by law, expected by adopted City plan, or are discretionary. This allows us to focus our efforts to maintain mandated services and those that the community has adopted into specific plans while balancing limited resources. Capital projects are being evaluated similarly. Historical data has been helpful in providing general cost information but not as useful in projecting revenues. We are using economic indicators and forecasts and known activity levels to project revenues.

The City Council will be voting to appoint three Citizen Budget Committee members at tomorrow's regular meeting, [Council Business Meeting - City Council - City of Ashland, Oregon](#). At this time, they are not taking additional applications but I encourage you to participate in the public hearings held by both the Budget Committee and the City Council as part of the budget process. As noted, we are scheduled to kick off the process on March 30th via Zoom at 3 p.m. The initial meeting will include a review of the role of the Citizen Budget Committee, the governing legislation, and the budget process as well as the presentation of the Recommended Budget by myself and Interim City Manager Adam Hanks. The remaining meetings and key topics are:

Tuesday, April 13 (Government Funds- General Fund, Streets Fund, Parks Fund, and other small Special Revenue funds),
Tuesday, April 27 (Enterprise Funds- Water, Sewer, Electric, Ashland Fiber Network, Stormwater, and Internal Service funds), and
Tuesday, May 11 (Final Review and Adoption).

All meetings are scheduled from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and will be on RVTV via Zoom. We will have public comment at each meeting as well as at the subsequent Council meetings with the final adoption of the budget scheduled for June 1 and the final tax rate hearing on June 15th. Information will be updated frequently on the City's website including poll questions regarding the array of City services funded by the budget. Questions are also welcome via the finance@ashland.or.us or BudgetCommittee@ashland.or.us email addresses.

Hope you decide to join the process and please let me know if I may answer any questions.

Thank you,
Melanie

Melanie D. Purcell, CPFO, SHRM-SCP

Finance Director
City of Ashland | Finance
20 East Main Street, Ashland, OR 97520
541-488-5300 Office | Voice, TTY 800-735-2900 | 541-552-2059 fax

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[REDACTED]

From: Leda Shapiro [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 10:45 AM
To: Finance
Cc: Leda Shapiro
Subject: BUDGET ISSUES

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi

I heard that you are looking for our input. I have studied the current budget and have listened in on several meetings

First, I would like to say that I consider reducing expenses and increasing revenue (not with higher taxes) as primary concerns.

At a meeting on Tuesday I heard Michael Black refer to the cost of benefits as not in our control. I do not believe this to be true. Given a real desire to get things done, there is always a way.

Here are a couple ways to reduce the cost of benefits

1. Take the 6% employee costs from the employees. This was given in lieu of raises last year, and untenable as an ongoing expense.

2. Eliminate all overtime. This is especially high in the police department. Remember that overtime pay is included in calculating pensions and is a way other cities have increased their liability to unsupportable limits. Overtime pay needs to be eliminated... even if it means hiring 1-2 additional officers. This needs to be analyzed.

3. Put a freeze on salaries or just do COLA.

Since these will affect the employees, the employees will understand that if these measures are not taken, layoffs will be needed instead. No one wants that.

Other things that need to be adjusted

1. % given to Parks to be decreased

2. All capital put on hold - to be reviewed mid term with budget revisions. This is especially true of the pool. The Parks department operations budget has a shortfall. I do not see how they can responsibly consider additional capital projects.

Increase Revenues

I just found out that 40% of the fo property in Ashland does not pay property tax. One way to get two birds with one stone is for the City to sell off all surplus land to develop mixed low/middle housing with 20% affordable on all apartments

This would give the City income from the sale plus property taxes on the land, and increase the inventory of affordable and low income housing.

I think that no one including the Parks should be able to purchase more land/add new projects (including a new pool which is too expensive and add too much to ongoing maintenance.

I have heard over and over again that it is not possible to build rental units with 20% affordable housing. I think there are several options for making this possible.

1. City to waive some of the developers fees
2. Sell surplus land for development of needed AFFORDABLE housing.

3. Look for subsidies and/or grants for part of development costs. I think, with the new Administration we can be proactive and get ready to apply for new HUD grants in order to build affordable and senior housing.

4. Look into Co-op housing.

I know there are probably obstacles in the way of doing a lot of what I am suggesting.

But instead of saying this or that is not possible, I think a better way to go would be to figure out a way to make it possible.

We are all hoping that this summer we will have some tourists be coming back. We do need to support businesses so there will be something for them to come for...and not empty store fronts.

Thank you for listening

Leda Shapiro

[REDACTED]

From: Robert Rawlings [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2021 1:24 PM
To: Finance
Subject: Trim staff

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello

During the push for the TID underground piping City officials would show up to the meetings specifically to push spending. They didn't really seem to care if anything was an actual viable solution or not. They just seemed to want to keep their jobs by doing busy work and creating spending.

I'm sure there are many departments that could trim staff or be eliminated entirely. For instance , I see no reason why Ashland has any kind of climate action employees. There is nothing Ashland can do to change the climate. There is a community of businesses and organizations that depend on green spending and donations . They have nothing to do with climate control. It's just bureaucracy.

An all volunteer climate committee would be sufficient.

I am very curious does talent, Phoenix or Medford have climate activists on staff in their city governments? I can pretty much guarantee Klamath Falls doesn't.

Thank you

Robert Rawlings
Ashland

Sent from my iPad

[REDACTED]

From: Clarkie [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 5:03 PM
To: Budget Committee
Subject: Vector Control Levy

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

3/15/21

Ashland Budget Committee

Dear Members:

For six years after becoming ill from pesticides, I have been working on trying to make changes to or better yet, dissolve the levy driven Jackson County Vector Control District. Making changes has gone nowhere. They have a very large operating budget of over 1mil. per year, which continues to rise as property values increase. Their manager makes close to a six-figure salary. They hire 10 temp employees every season to aerosol spray all of our residential neighborhoods. This goes on from May through October. They are governed only by ORS 454 which gives them authority to spray as they want, enter private property without notice. There is no protection property owners have to defend themselves from the aerosol spraying except a "courtesy" no spray list which they do not advertise and gets purged every year.

JCVCD is one of only 10 county districts that have a vector control district. And, of those Jackson Co. is the only one that sprays so continuously and regularly in spite of not having a mosquito problem. They are the only one that uses the Bayer product, DeltaGard which is a pyrethroid that in humans is an endocrine (hormone) disruptor. It is deadly to bees and fish as the label says. This is only a brief overview as I have quite a large file.

When quite by accident shortly after moving here (and getting sick) in 2015, I found out about the vector control spraying habits, I alerted the public and it drew quite a fury as no one even knew this was happening. Health conscious residents of Ashland were especially upset and it appeared I would have some advocates. But, that enthusiasm fizzled for whatever reason. Most Ashlanders feel if they get on the "do not spray" list (which is no guarantee your property will not be sprayed at their discretion) that it is enough. As a result the majority on the "do not spray" list consists of mostly Ashland residents, they do not spray in Ashland as a rule with the exception of the greenway up to Oak Street.

Getting to my point, my idea I think you will like is to put on the next ballot a vote for Ashland to opt out of the levy. There is an ORS procedure for that already on the books. If they are not spraying or providing any other vector services to Ashland, why are you paying them?

If on the same ballot you could introduce another levy for parks, this would be an even trade and not cost citizens anything. I haven't calculated what the monetary figure would be but that should be easy enough to find out. Or the other option is for a ballot measure to dissolve Ashland from the levy paid by Ashland property owners by accepting responsibility for your own vector control through public works. This would not be any work on your PW department. The remaining

34 counties in Oregon do nothing. If there is ever a need for mosquito control the whole state is covered by Dept. of Agriculture, Fish and Game, Oregon University Extension, etc. There has never been and is not predicted there ever will be a mosquito disaster in Oregon.

Sorry for the length, I could and probably should write a book on this.

Please let me know if you have any more questions. I feel that if we can get at least one city in Jackson County to opt out at least this will put a big dent in their operating budget and perhaps more cities might follow suit. The county has the power to dissolve JDVCD but I have not been successful in getting their attention. Too bad, they could absorb the 1mil!

Thank you for your attention.

Clarkie Clark
Phoenix, OR

[REDACTED]

Subject: FW: City Council Contact Form Submitted

From: City of Ashland, Oregon <administration@ashland.or.us>

Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2021 9:08 AM

To: City Council <council@ashland.or.us>

Subject: City Council Contact Form Submitted

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

*** FORM FIELD DATA***

Full Name: **Phil Hutchings**

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Subject: **budget and spending and not passing cost overruns to the taxpayer please**

Message: **thank you**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Karin [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2021 11:43 AM
To: Finance
Subject: Bring Our City Budget Under Control NOW

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Budget Committee,

I am disheartened, actually sickened, by what is proposed for the future city budget with increases of up to 75% over the next nine years for utility rates/fees/taxes. I'm also alarmed at the compensation levels and sheer number of city staff as a ratio to residents compared to other small towns in Oregon.

This does not at all reflect what the voters indicated last November when they elected Akins as mayor and Moran to the council. It is time for change! Just because the "old guard" still has command of the council does not mean they represent or are even tuned into the current needs and desires of this community. If their goal is to homogenize this once thriving artistic community and displace all the individuals and businesses that make this town a tourist destination, OSF aside, then they are succeeding!

I am also curious as to how the city plans to use the \$4.4 million coming to us in the form of federal stimulus money.

We are just emerging from a year-long shutdown. How tone deaf can the council possibly be? They are not engendering goodwill or helping to create a hopeful future for us. In short, they do not represent us! Please do what you can to bring the city budget under control at this pivotal point.

Thank you,
Karin Onkka
Owner of two small businesses in Ashland 23-year resident

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

From: gwen davies [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2021 12:24 PM
To: Finance
Subject: public testimony for 3/30/21 CBC meeting

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

To the CBC:

I am particularly concerned about the Budget process this year. There were so many issues identified in the last two budget cycles that were never properly addressed. It is obvious we were in deep trouble before the pandemic. Coupled with continued financial management issues and an inability to make mature financial decisions, it appears we are facing catastrophe. There are so many issues to be discussed, it is hard to narrow them down. The best advice might be for you to review what the public told you four years ago and two years ago when they were expressing concerns about cutting spending and changing habits. Ashland ACES have described the issues well for at least five years. Please, refer to their critiques.

I refer you to the recent letter from Ashland Aces, their figures and descriptions of the transferring of money from fund to fund without accountability or any professional competence. It may have been actually corrupt or illegal. What has been done is probably under some description of "Worst Professional Practices." This needs to stop and be corrected now....this budget cycle.

I oppose any increases in utility bills this biennium. Only the most essential projects and city functions should be covered. I strongly oppose making current residents of Ashland pay for projects out of pocket, especially now. We should look at 30 Year Bonds after carefully vetting any projects. That spreads the costs over the years so all who benefit from various projects pay for them. Past elected officials have used the utility rate increases and other increases to amass a lot of money...then you raid it...."loan" and forgive the loan....and turn to the voters again to fill up your slush fund again! One example often cited is taking money that was set aside to keep the Community Center and Pioneer Hall in proper repair and use it for other expenses. The public did not even know....Then you turn around with exorbitant new requests for millions more. Those who voted for all these proposed increases this week at CC are still doing that. I thank those who voted against the increases.

The habit of hiring the most expensive consultant you can find, often from out of our area, has to stop now!!! This applies to other professionals as well. YOU seem to think if you spend more money it is superior. It is not! It is wasteful.

All departments should be on a zero budget balancing.

Staff positionsespecially at management levels...need to be streamlined or consolidated with positions being eliminated or left unfilled. We need layoffs to get us out of the pandemic years. Contracts with staff need to be renegotiated and insurance as soon as possible. There might be better ways to handle many functions.

All non essential staff/management should be laid off, positions eliminated or left unfilled. Programs need to be culled, privatized, or eliminated too. Right now we need to prioritize the most essential as well! Many non essential programs are in the Parks Department. Line staff needs to stay as much as possible while management can be streamlined.

Is there property that can be sold? Consider charging entities that use public property "market rate values." That seems to be the gun club and OSF for two examples.

I hear APRC wants to be "independent" and have no oversight from CC. According to reports, during a recent public meeting, APRC has even proposed barricading off Lithia Park and seizing OSF??!! While that may have been a joke, I am not too sure. This needs to be immediately squelched. Perhaps changes to the Charter/ordinances covering APRC are in order as well. Obviously this includes the budget decisions and also goes beyond them. Something needs clarification. Parks are beloved but not essential the way streets, water, sewer, fire, police, garbage etc are.

The one department that might need to be much better funded is the FIRE DEPARTMENT. Cuts to them have inexplicably been made in the last few years....insane as those cuts also happened in the beginning of summer. We need the best quality ambulance service as well. I think our current very local arrangement is much better than a more regional approach. With so many impacts from the Alameda Fire, I believe we should slow down any changes and assessments for two to four years and assess and plan from there. Realities are changing fast. Fire prevention and emergency evacuation is at the top of my list as essential.

Look at the restaurant tax and hotel taxes to make sure they are directed to diversification of the economy....if it has to be under a tourism label, everything must "multi task" and serve the City itself and residents/voters. I quite frankly think that all needs a major overhaul...including at a state level. Resilient economies and communities are diverse....(in every sense of the word of course).

We want equitable fees and charges but not ones that dampen the economy. We used to have five elementary schools!!!

I believe the next two years and possibly four should be a transition that is accessible to the public more than ever. Do not exclude many residents who are not on social media or who cannot wrestle with the City website. This process needs to be grass roots and take some time to truly be authentic and successful. Climate change is intensifying; more change is on the way. We need to have functional structures and processes for our current time. The old power groups and structures have gotten us to where we are now. I would prefer Ashland not go bankrupt. I would prefer we embrace transparency and democracy, ethics and competence.

Thank you for your attention and service.

[REDACTED]

From: Susan Hall [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 21, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Finance
Cc: Susan Hall RN; Ted Hall
Subject: Fwd: 2021-2023 Biennium

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

- >
- > 3/20/21
- > To the 14 Budget Committee members:
- >
- > I have some thoughts regarding the “process” to share with you prior to listening to the upcoming presentation of the recommended budget on March 30, 2021. Having observed 2 past Budget Committee deliberations, has left me with recollections of lost opportunities. I observed lost opportunities by Members to listen respectfully, be fully transparent with information requested, and avoid “dodging” questions that IF candidly answered would have helped all involved to understand the financial condition of our town. I watched as some City Council members and City Staff brushed aside well informed Public Committee members’ questions regarding City expenditures and questions that tried to explore the sources of funding being shifted around.
- >
- > Any of you who were involved in earlier Budget Committee work will recognized my observations. I urge this new Budget Committee to remember it is the Ashland taxpayer and visitors (who spend \$\$ here) who finance the workings of our town.
- > It is imperative that past mistakes in finance decisions, CIP projects, City staffing levels and payroll be candidly discussed. Ignoring poor past planning cannot continue. Many residents have repeatedly requested that expenditures be reduced. Only to be ignored. Usually what is presented by staff are ideas for “revenue enhancement”. And the past City Councils have seemed unable or unwilling to refocus the City Staff on presenting cost cutting ideas. The few cost cutting ideas that have been presented were trivial, in my opinion.
- >
- > Residents want to be shown the rationale for where and why their \$\$\$ is being spent.
- > Residents want to know why we have so many staff, more than other towns our size by a lot!
- > Residents want to know who thinks up and prioritizes the projects in our HUGE CIP.
- > Residents want to see the City staff be responsive to Citizens’ feedback.
- > Residents want the City staff making our financial decisions be held responsible for their decisions.
- >
- > The management of City funds in the years 2015-2019 (including the 2017-2019 budget) appear to have some questionable rationale . I observed as some former “public members “ of the past Budget Committees attempted to “tease out” the details, only to be steamrolled and left frustrated and insulted and without clear answers. This past behavior is not going to get us to where we need to go in solving our financial woes...it must be replaced with cooperation and truthfulness.
- >
- > In closing, I urge all of you to understand that this work is critical and your contribution to the success of getting Ashland’s “Financial House” in order will be validated and much appreciated by every Ashland resident.

- > My final observation is this: We need to return to the annual budget model which would allow a more streamline and clear way to track our expenses and find areas that are overrun and/or underfunded more quickly. This biennium model is unmanageable.

> Thank you and good luck.

> Susan Hall RN

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

>

>

>

> Sent from my iPad

[REDACTED]

From: Ted Hall [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 3:41 PM
To: Finance
Cc: Susan Hall
Subject: Budget Comments

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

As an engineer (Retired), I have a serious concern about the Ashland Budget. The CIP (Capital Improvement Program) for our City is way over stated.

This becomes an annual budget concern in my mind because besides the capital cost of CIP projects the CIP size is used to justify too large of a Public Works staff to support and manage discretionary as well as required Capital Projects. Many of the CIP projects to me appear discretionary. The Ashland CIP process keeps projects on the list and rolls them forward without a prioritization of elements to it. Are many of these "Capital" projects even needed ever or just nice to have?

I think the Ashland budgeting process this go around should set the CIP to zero base budgeting then start from scratch to only reinstate those projects on a new list that rank high on a "prioritization" analysis. Is the project really needed and what is the cost benefit?

By doing this The City should be able to to reduce public works Capital Projects Staff.

And if there is a need for a high priority Capital project under a tight Public works staff regime, a project specific construction manager can always be retained for that given project, and not depend on full time staff. Construction manager staff have their benefits paid by their private company not by the public. And when a project is completed the staff are released. Full time city staff need to be reduced to a minimum. Reducing Public Works Staff is one place staff reductions can be made with no adverse impact to projects that are implemented.

Ted Hall
Ashland

[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 11:04 AM
To: City Council; Budget Committee
Cc: ashlandaces@charter.net; 'Carol Voisin'
Subject: WWTP CBA

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Esteemed Mayor, Councilors, and CBC members:

I'm trying to find out why there has been no cost benefit analysis of abandoning the WWTP and hooking into RVSS. This is critical to get our financial house in order. Wastewater treatment is one of the largest items in the budget by far.

According to the BN 19-21 budget, The Wastewater Division accounts for over \$6M/yr just to operate. That figure does NOT include debt service or capital outlay, just personnel, materials/services, and central services.

The current CIP calls for over \$13M outlays over the next 6 years.

Just those two items will cost the city about \$50M over the next 6 years, not accounting for inflation of costs and unanticipated maintenance items.

The only off the cuff estimate of hooking up I've heard was maybe \$35M. Even if that's way low and it's \$50M, it's a wash after 6 years.

Of course we have to find out the usage charges.

And this is just the financials. We would also stop dumping hot water into Bear Creek. We would not have to jump through hoops trying to deal with DEQ, EPA, etc.

What I'm saying is that it's essential that we *investigate* the possibility that it might be worth doing. Consider the WWTP a mistake, a sunk cost. Perhaps the facility could be reutilized as some kind of benefit for the community.

And it's essential that we do it *right away*, before public works starts throwing money at the upgrades to the current WWTP, which are scheduled to begin this year as *preventative* maintenance. If those proactive maintenance items can be postponed until they are *necessary*, perhaps we can avoid them altogether, or many of them.

It seems obvious to me that we *must* investigate this option *now*.

How can we make this happen?

Thanks for your consideration,
Dean

Dean Silver



[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:24 PM
To: City Council; Budget Committee
Subject: BUDGET: Revenues vs. Expenses
Attachments: UTILITY RATES.pdf

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Esteemed Mayor, Councilors, and Citizens' Budget Committee members:

Ashland's BN 2021-23 budget must reflect the realities of the current economy, and the wants and needs of its citizens. After at least ten years of rising property taxes and utility rates and fees, it is time to focus on reducing expenses.

In the past ten years, the fixed fees on my utility bill have increased 59%, water rates have increased 82%, and electric rates have increased about 40% [see attached]. Property taxes are at the statutory maximum.

In the most recent election, and with the bond issue, the voters made a clear choice for fiscal restraint. Council and The Budget Committee need to respect that choice.

The City has many fixed expenses that cannot be avoided. The city has infrastructure that must be maintained. Those must be budgeted.

The current CIP contains many projects that are not necessary to maintain the quality of life desired by Ashland residents. The current CIP contains many errors, redundancies, and inexplicable line items that cannot be justified. The current CIP contains many projects that have been carried forward for years without renewed consideration. The current CIP was not presented to Council in time for them to consider the contents. Thus, council approved it without having adequately evaluated the projects therein.

The budget must, therefore, not be based upon the CIP that was delivered to council.

This is not a time to be expanding revenues. The estimated total fund balances for June 30, 2021 is \$51,065,976. There is no need to hastily increase revenues at this time. The prudent approach would be to maintain revenues at the current level.

Council must be given the time to consider any new expenditures BEFORE they are included in the budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dean Silver

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:34 PM
To: City Council; Budget Committee
Subject: BUDGET: Budget / CIP Process

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Esteemed Mayor, Councilors, and Citizens' Budget Committee members:

The budget process in Ashland is badly broken. Here is a simple idea to help improve it:

Prepare the CIP on alternating years, not concurrent with the biennial budget. Have council consider the CIP on even numbered years since the budget is considered on odd numbered years.

According to the code, the purpose of the CIP is to justify SDCs [AMC 4.20.080]. Of course it's an extremely useful tool for planning, and should be continued.

But as it now stands, the council does not have sufficient time to review the CIP. The budget is already prepared by staff by the time the council gets the CIP. The assumptions in the CIP are baked into the staff's budget. Then the Budget Committee has to deal with the budget that was prepared on what are often faulty assumptions of what the city's CI needs are, and the Council's policy goals. Some are legacy projects carried forward year after year, many of which should be eliminated or reevaluated. As it stands now there is no time for the council to give the CIP due consideration. The CIP needs to be approved BEFORE staff prepares the budget.

Council sets policy. Staff implements those policies. As it stands now, the Council is reacting to the budget prepared by staff instead of giving direction to staff.

I have searched the charter and the code, and see no reason why this can't happen. Council can pass a resolution to this effect.

Alternate the CIP and the budget years. Starting next year, 2022, have the council take up the CIP early in the year and spend enough time on it to analyze and evaluate it. Staff can either prepare a revised CIP for 2022, or they can carry the current document forward with revisions. Whichever, that would be the basis of the 2023 budget deliberations. The next new CIP would be presented to Council in early 2024 to be referenced in the 2025 budget, etc.

The only disadvantage to this schedule I see is that the estimates will have been prepared a year earlier in the budget cycle. But that should not be particularly relevant to Capital Improvement Projects. Costs may rise due to inflation, but that should be taken into account in the CIP. The CIP does not affect the other aspects of the budget. The budget process can still account for any rapidly changing financial conditions.

I believe the benefits of this approach far outweigh any disadvantages.

Please give it your careful consideration.

Dean Silver



[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:38 PM
To: City Council; Budget Committee
Subject: BUDGET: Personnel

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Esteemed Mayor, Councilors, and Citizens' Budget Committee members:

Personnel costs are the second largest expense item in the chart of accounts.

We all need to tighten our belts, and that includes city employees.

Here are a few simple suggestions to control the annual inflation of personnel costs.

1. Freeze hiring at current levels. No new positions at this time.
2. Do not rehire positions lost to attrition unless they are deemed essential.
3. Aggressively renegotiate employment contracts as they come up for renewal.
4. No annual COLAs at this time.
5. Stop paying the employee's 6% contribution to PERS .

Of course, all existing contracts should be respected. That does not preclude renegotiation before renewal.

The basic fact to keep in mind is that Ashland city employees are compensated, on average, far more generously than employees in other municipalities. Compensation is so high in Ashland that no one is likely to leave their city jobs if their wages remain constant and their benefits fall. And if they do, there will be plenty of qualified people willing to take their places.

Please take these suggestions into consideration when constructing the budget.

Thank you.

Dean Silver

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Anne Bellegia [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 26, 2021 12:48 PM
To: Budget Committee
Cc: Michael Black; Julian Bell; Leslie Eldridge; Mike Gardiner; Rick Landt; Jim Lewis; Isleen Glatt; Rachel Dials; Melanie Purcell
Subject: APRC Biennium 2021-2023 Budget

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Members of the Citizens Budget Committee,

I am testifying in support of adopting the APRC Biennium 2021-23 Budget submitted by Director Black and approved by the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission. It reflects the following:

- Realism about the city-wide funding pressures and a willingness to share in the accommodations
- Provision for maintaining basic operations of APRC services that consistently earn some of the highest marks in the National Citizen Survey's Ashland Livability Report
- Sustaining a visible expression of the City's commitment to inclusion and diversity through facilities and programs that can be utilized by those all ages, incomes, races, ethnicities and abilities
- Acknowledgment that the reduction in the APRC reserve is temporary and will be relieved by the restoration of historical revenue sources and a strategic assessment of other sources

Ashland Parks and Recreation services have been the bright spot in a bleak year. They let us congregate with others at a safe distance; use our local parks, trails and bike paths to remain physically fit; and benefit from the enduring serenity of nature. APRC services also provided an unprecedented number of citizens whose finances and social connections were impacted by the pandemic and the fire with essential supports and linked them to vital information and assistance available from other organizations and agencies.

Maintaining the beautiful surroundings and recreational attractions of Ashland will help restore the food and beverage tax revenues that our visitors provide, along with the jobs that sustain the livelihood of our citizens, both directly and indirectly. I believe the above points are broadly applicable to the needs, values, health and wellbeing of all who live, work and recreate in the City of Ashland.

Sincerely,

Anne Bellegia
Chair, Ashland Senior Advisory Committee

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 11:34 AM
To: Finance
Subject: 3/30/21 Budget Committee Testimony

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Esteemed Mayor, Councilors, and CBC members:

I am writing to urge Council and the CBC to undertake a cost benefit analysis of abandoning the WWTP and hooking into RVSS. This is critical to get our financial house in order. Wastewater treatment is one of the largest items in the budget by far.

According to the BN 19-21 budget, The Wastewater Division accounts for over \$6M/yr just to operate. That figure does NOT include debt service or capital outlay, just personnel, materials/services, and central services.

The current CIP calls for over \$13M outlays over the next 6 years.

Just those two items will cost the city about \$50M over the next 6 years, not accounting for inflation of costs and unanticipated maintenance items.

The only off the cuff estimate of hooking up I've heard was maybe \$35M. Even if that's way low and it's \$50M, it's a wash after 6 years.

Of course we have to find out the usage charges.

And this is just the financials. We would also stop dumping hot water into Bear Creek. We would not have to jump through hoops trying to deal with DEQ, EPA, etc.

What I'm saying is that it's essential that we *investigate* the possibility that it might be worth doing. Consider the WWTP a mistake, a sunk cost. Perhaps the facility could be reutilized as some kind of benefit for the community.

And it's essential that we do it *right away*, before public works starts throwing money at the upgrades to the current WWTP, which are scheduled to begin this year as *preventative* maintenance. If those proactive maintenance items can be postponed until they are *necessary*, perhaps we can avoid them altogether, or many of them.

It seems obvious to me that we *must* investigate this option *now*.

Thanks for your consideration,
Dean

Dean Silver

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:26 PM
To: Finance
Subject: 3/30/21 Budget Committee Testimony
Attachments: UTILITY RATES.pdf

[EXTERNAL SENDER]
For the public record:

Ashland's BN 2021-23 budget must reflect the realities of the current economy, and the wants and needs of its citizens. After at least ten years of rising property taxes and utility rates and fees, it is time to focus on reducing expenses.

In the past ten years, the fixed fees on my utility bill have increased 59%, water rates have increased 82%, and electric rates have increased about 40% [see attached]. Property taxes are at the statutory maximum.

In the most recent election, and with the bond issue, the voters made a clear choice for fiscal restraint. Council and The Budget Committee need to respect that choice.

The City has many fixed expenses that cannot be avoided. The city has infrastructure that must be maintained. Those must be budgeted.

The current CIP contains many projects that are not necessary to maintain the quality of life desired by Ashland residents. The current CIP contains many errors, redundancies, and inexplicable line items that cannot be justified. The current CIP contains many projects that have been carried forward for years without renewed consideration. The current CIP was not presented to Council in time for them to consider the contents. Thus, council approved it without having adequately evaluated the projects therein.

The budget must, therefore, not be based upon the CIP that was delivered to council.

This is not a time to be expanding revenues. The estimated total fund balances for June 30, 2021 is \$51,065,976. There is no need to hastily increase revenues at this time. The prudent approach would be to maintain revenues at the current level.

Council must be given the time to consider any new expenditures BEFORE they are included in the budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dean Silver

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:31 PM
To: Finance
Subject: 3/30/21 Budget Committee Testimony

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

The budget process in Ashland is badly broken. Here is a simple idea to help improve it:

Prepare the CIP on alternating years, not concurrent with the biennial budget. Have council consider the CIP on even numbered years since the budget is considered on odd numbered years.

According to the code, the purpose of the CIP is to justify SDCs [AMC 4.20.080]. Of course it's an extremely useful tool for planning, and should be continued.

But as it now stands, the council does not have sufficient time to review the CIP. The budget is already prepared by staff by the time the council gets the CIP. The assumptions in the CIP are baked into the staff's budget. Then the Budget Committee has to deal with the budget that was prepared on what are often faulty assumptions of what the city's CI needs are, and the Council's policy goals. Some are legacy projects carried forward year after year, many of which should be eliminated or reevaluated. As it stands now there is no time for the council to give the CIP due consideration. The CIP needs to be approved BEFORE staff prepares the budget.

Council sets policy. Staff implements those policies. As it stands now, the Council is reacting to the budget prepared by staff instead of giving direction to staff.

I have searched the charter and the code, and see no reason why this can't happen. Council can pass a resolution to this effect.

Alternate the CIP and the budget years. Starting next year, 2022, have the council take up the CIP early in the year and spend enough time on it to analyze and evaluate it. Staff can either prepare a revised CIP for 2022, or they can carry the current document forward with revisions. Whichever, that would be the basis of the 2023 budget deliberations. The next new CIP would be presented to Council in early 2024 to be referenced in the 2025 budget, etc.

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Please give it your careful consideration.

Dean Silver



[REDACTED]

From: Dean Silver [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:40 PM
To: Finance
Subject: 3/30/21 Budget Committee Testimony

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

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Please take these suggestions into consideration when constructing the budget.

Thank you.

Dean Silver

[REDACTED]