



City Administrator's Report

Adam Hanks, Interim City Administrator

JULY 7, 2020

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

FOURTH OF JULY PLAZA EVENTS RECAP

As the traditional Fourth of July celebration was cancelled, the Ashland Chamber of Commerce along with plaza building owners and businesses created a much more scaled down version in collaboration with the City.

The Plaza area was closed down from Friday morning until Monday morning to allow for more pedestrian traffic and outdoor space for businesses. The Chamber of Commerce facilitated live music around the downtown area on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings along with the Ashland Brass Band (a condensed version of the Ashland City Band) playing in the Plaza.

A huge thank you to the Public Works Department who were able to set up barricades around the Plaza, created a detour route around the Plaza area, and were on call to address any issues that arose over the weekend.



ASHLAND SUMMER CELEBRATION SERIES

In conjunction with the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, the City will help support the community and businesses with the [Ashland Summer Celebration Series](#). Each weekend throughout July to September will include a theme with specials and promotions from local businesses. The City's role is to provide safety barricades and traffic control where needed as parts of the downtown area will be expanded for pedestrian and business use.

While we are excited for the series, it is still important to adhere to social distancing and mask wearing while indoors and walking around downtown. Doing both will allow everyone to stay safe and open as many states are rolling back their reopening efforts due to an increase of cases.

DOWNTOWN PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Parking enforcement has resumed in July to help ensure that parking is available for all who visit downtown. While on-street parking will go back to the regular two hour limits (four in some lots where posted), the parking structure on Hargadine will have discounted hourly and monthly permits for purchase. For more information, go to ashland.or.us/parking.

Some parking spots downtown will also be converted into business and pedestrian use only as the [Ashland Summer Celebration Series](#) occurs throughout the summer. See Ashland Summer Celebration Series section for more information.

FINANCE DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT

As the recruitment for the Finance Director continues, our Human Resources Division set up a survey to collect public input. The survey asks residents to rank certain skills, qualifications, and attributes in order of preference. The survey also allows residents to add in additional qualities not listed. The survey opened on Monday, July 6 and will close on Monday, July 20. Residents can complete the survey by going to ashland.or.us/engage and select the Finance Director Recruitment survey.

Results are scheduled to be presented to Council on Tuesday, August 4; where the Council will be asked to finalize the Selection Criteria. Interviews with selected candidates will likely occur later in August depending on COVID-19 restrictions.

SECOND QUARTER MARIJUANA TAX

The City of Ashland will receive around \$30,000 in Marijuana Tax monies collected from March 2020 through May 2020. This revenue is a shared distribution with the State from Oregon's 17 percent tax on retail sales of marijuana.

The City of Ashland has committed \$100,000 of the Marijuana Tax money to go towards the Affordable Housing Trust Fund each fiscal year. When the \$100,000 is allocated to the Trust Fund, the remaining amount goes into the General Fund. The Finance Department estimates that this \$30,000 from the Marijuana tax will go into the General Fund.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Councilor Graham and Jensen have expressed interest and offered a proposal for an e-newsletter to increase community awareness and engagement. The proposal was a helpful overview of what is preferred, but the City does face high staff workload and financial barriers preventing a full and timely adoption.

Fortunately, many of the details of the proposal the City currently utilizes. The City has a website subscription tool that allows those interested to sign up for emails about agendas and minutes for Council and advisory body meetings, news releases or general notices from the City, projects, calendar events, employment offerings, and request for proposals. The City also has six Facebook pages (one main and five for Departments) and a Twitter page to get information quickly to the community. For more details on the City's current communications channels directly to the public, go to ashland.or.us/connect.

Moving forward, Administration is working with our website provider, Project A, to switch over to a WordPress based platform to allow for more customization in page design and emails sent to subscribers. This would allow the City to expand from a current platform retaining current users and subscribers without needing a full retraining of staff.

With both current and additional communication tools, the City will continue to focus on the goal of getting factual information to the community in a timely manner.

BPA RATE TEMPORARY REDUCTION

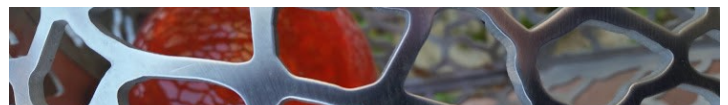
The City of Ashland, along with other Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) customers, will see a rate reduction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reduction is a result of suspending the Financial Reserves Policy Surcharge for the remainder of fiscal years 2020 and 2021 starting on June 29.

The City will see a total rate reduction of \$154,119 resulting in a reduction of expenses around \$10,000 to \$12,000 per month. The City is hoping that the reduction will help cover expenses incurred from customers who were not able to make payments on delayed or non-paid bills. [Click here for the official BPA press release.](#)

GRANTS

Business Oregon Grant—The City was awarded \$70,000 in matching funds from Business Oregon to offer the COVID-19 Emergency Business Grant Program to local businesses. The grant is available online at ashland.or.us/covid19grant. As of July 6, 28 applications have been received. The grant will close on July 8 at 4 p.m. Funding for the program will be dispersed to approved businesses and non-profits by the end of July.

Tourism Grant—An \$80,000 grant will also be offered to qualifying non-profits to promote tourism in Ashland. This grant was formed from the Economic, Cultural, Tourism, and Sustainability Grant offered each year, which was reduced due to the COVID-19 crisis. The timeline for the tourism grant is similar to the COVID-19 Emergency Business Grant Program. The targeted goal is to fund non-profits holding activities and events promoting tourism for Summer and Fall 2020. The application can be filled out online at ashland.or.us/engage before the deadline 4 p.m. on July 8.



LOOKING AHEAD

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

July 20—Study Session

- Affordable Housing Standards Update
- Immediately following, an Executive Session on labor negotiations will be held, pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d).

July 21—Business Meeting

- COVID-19 Update & Extension of COVID-19 Emergency Declaration
- Request for Proposal (RFP) to Provide Internet Bandwidth
- Update on City Hall
- Council Input on League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Legislative Priorities
- Potential Contract Approval IBEW Clerical/Technical
- Second Reading of Food and Beverage Ordinance
- Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Allocation Resolution

For the full look ahead and more details on the above items, go to ashland.or.us/lookahead.