

Testimony #1

Hello Ashland City Council,

I am a registered voter and I vote. I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>

I implore you to consider this model deeply, as it protects the lives of our most vulnerable citizens when they feel threatened, while also protecting police officers from situations which they are not trained to respond to.

As a nation, the USA asks a great deal of a policing force. They are first responders to nearly any 911 call, even if that call does not require law enforcement. Officers put their mental and physical health at risk every day, and I believe that this CAHOOTS method will not only protect our citizens, but also the officers who police them.

In Ashland in particular, our officers are often called upon to remove a Houseless population from downtown.(Ordinance #2759 Pandhandling/Camping) When officers are called to these scenes, individuals are often cuffed, or detained by the Ashland Police force. If we have a CAHOOTS method in place, these scenes could be places where the Houseless population could have the care that they need provided to them by trained professionals, as well as allowing the police to focus on actual crime. While this is only a small step to helping the Houseless community at large, I believe it is a step in the right direction.

Let's use CAHOOTS to help end police brutality, and protect the people who need our help the most.

On the Ashland Police's website, they list their Mission Statement:

"Partner with the community to promote public safety, public order, and the development of innovative crime prevention strategies while providing exceptional service"

To me, partnering with the community means using community resources, like CAHOOTS. CAHOOTS is also an innovative crime prevention strategy, as it is built for situations the police are not trained to handle, that CAHOOTS trained professionals are.

I hope that this letter opens your mind to the possibility of this change, and that you consider deeply the effects of a reformed police force on the most vulnerable members of our society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cassandra del Nero

Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs, She/Her/Hers

Testimony #2

Dear Council:

I am a registered voter voting in the non-incorporated area surrounding Ashland. I am calling for the City of Ashland to reform the Ashland Police Department and adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield-Metro area. Here is a link to information about Cahoots. It is important to me that progressive areas of the state lead the way to reforming our current police model.

Yours cordially,

Eric Levin

Testimony #3

Hello Ashland Public Servants,

I am a registered voter and I vote in Ashland. I'm calling on the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and shift those monies to adopt the CAHOOTS Program of the Eugene-Springfield Metro area.

Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>

I believe we must protect the Police from having to carry such a heavy burden. They need help in dealing with the Houseless, the mentally challenged, and other marginalized and underserved populations. Let's have Police focus on actual crime. Let's have community service professionals deal with everything else.

Laurie Kurutz
Ashland, Oregon

Testimony #4

Hello,

I am registered to vote, and I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield metro area.

Thank you,
Hayley Goerisch

Testimony #5

Dear Ashland City Council:

I am an Ashland resident and registered voter, and I am employed at SOU.

Ashland is an extremely safe, low-crime city that can afford to innovate our thinking around community safety and emergency response. We are over-policed, and our greatest community challenges stem from homelessness, food insecurity, addiction, and inadequate mental health resources, none of which our police are well-equipped to address. It is time to begin the work of unbundling (see [this](#) from *The Atlantic*) police services in Ashland, separating the task of law enforcement from services that armed police are ill-equipped to provide. As Princeton sociologist Patrick Sharkey is quoted in the *Atlantic* piece linked above: “Two questions that could guide the reform movement are ‘What is it that police actually do?’ and ‘Why do we need armed police to do it?’”

We can take our first steps in this process by implementing an exceptional program pioneered in Eugene, Oregon, called [CAHOOTS](#). NPR [recently profiled](#) the COHOOTS program, which shifts many emergency calls away from police to social workers. Such a program would work well in Ashland, and we should begin to restructure the city's policing budget to support this separation of duties.

I would go further and suggest that there is no reason, in a city as safe as Ashland, that any officer should carry a deadly weapon on their person in the ordinary course of their daily duties. If any emergency truly called for deadly force, police could access such firearms quickly enough. However, there is no reason for an officer to carry a pistol while walking Main St downtown or during routine traffic stops. This might sound like an extreme position to take in Chicago or Los Angeles, but in Ashland, it is just common sense.

I am passionate about the de-escalation and demilitarization of America policing, and I will no longer vote for any candidate who does not take a vocal stance in support of debundling police services and redirecting police budgets to support a safe and equitable city for all who reside here. Let's look to the CAHOOTS model as a first step.

Thank you for your consideration,

Andrew Kenneth Gay
Associate Professor, SOU

Testimony #6

Dear Council,

I know that the city is looking for new ways to balance the budget amid devastating proposed losses from tourism-associated taxes in Ashland this year. I propose the entire shortfall be taken by the police department. In fact, I believe Ashland should significantly reduce the number of patrol officers and sergeants and maintain only the bare minimum in the police department for a small criminal investigative/violence-response force, and look at re-allocating funds from police into other structures to address social ills that have too long been punted to the police. Police have been expected to do too much, and it is time to reduce the scope of their responsibility. This may look like Eugene's CAHOOTS program that utilizes social workers to respond to non-violent calls related to addiction, mental illness, or homelessness. It may mean unarmed community officers responding to ELEA violations. Now is a perfect time to re-envision our criminal justice system within Ashland, and defund policing to maintain our fire, parks, and community development.

Ariel

Testimony #7

Hi,

Thank you for holding this public hearing on the current budgeting of funds. After reviewing the cost budget reduction table I agree with the reduction of cost to the police and ask that you consider a greater amount be taking out of the police force fund. Too much money already is going into the "defense" of Ashland, I propose shifting to the "offensive".

As for community development and parks I request that a lessor amount is taken away from these areas. These are the glue to our community and without them we will continue to see a breakdown and degradation in Ashland.

Thank you so much for hearing me. I look forward to hearing the budget plans.

Leslie Seckelman

Co-Founder of Levity Circus Collective, LLC

Testimony #8

To whom it may concern,

I am a local Ashland resident. I'm also a registered voter and I vote. I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS:

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Sincerely,

Hannah Johnson

Testimony #9

To whom it may concern,

I'm a local student, 21 years old, and a resident in ashland. I am a registered voter and I vote. I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to info about CAHOOTS:

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From your local taxpayer,
Chance McCloud

Testimony #10

To Any and All Ashland Proprietors,

My name is Antonio Cucumo, a current resident and tax-payer of Ashland city, as well as registered voter. Our city, though progressive, still has a major racism stigma and that includes our current policing system. I call to the city of Ashland to reallocate funds from the police station and instead fund a program such as or similar to CAHOOTS - a program that contains different facets of policing such as deescalation units, social workers for homeless and those suffering from mental illness, and other welcomed programs that provide safe and secure situations and locations.

Here is a link to a CAHOOTS informational webpage produced by NPR:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>

And here is a contact panel in case you would like to speak with Eugene representatives and discuss how they implemented their program:

<https://whitebirdclinic.org/services/cahoots/>

Thank you for your time,

Antonio Cucumo

Testimony #11

Dear Ashland City Council Members,

I have lived and worked in Ashland since 2007. I am also a registered voter, and I vote. I have watched the events recently unfolding in our nation with absolute horror, and have spent considerable time over the past several weeks listening to the voices and stories of Black people and other people of color. They have a powerful story to tell the rest of us about the history of our nation, state, and city - and how the power structures we take for granted have too long worked to keep them unsafe and un-free.

As I have listened, I have realized that the current paradigm of policing in the US is due for a serious examination and overhaul. The current dialogue around "defunding" police departments is exciting and inspiring. It acknowledges that our police have been asked to do too much, and that our tax dollars could be spent more effectively. It imagines a nation where a good amount of funding now going to police departments can be re-allocated to services that are targeted to actually improving lives of people of all races who need greater community support, thus pulling down the systematic structures that perpetuate racism and inequality. I realize that Ashland has a relatively good situation when it comes to our police department, however that does not mean that we should not try to do better and work to be a leader in the more just society that all Americans deserve.

As a start, I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS: <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>

Thank you for your consideration,
Kate Halstead
Ashland, OR

Testimony #12

As an Ashland resident, Owner of a Business downtown (Ashland Creek Café) a Past Ashland Schools Board Member and concerned citizen I implore the City to NOT drastically reduce the funding for APD.

Would I like to see more funds go to creative solutions like the Cahoots article I forwarded to all last week from last Fall in what Eugene and Springfield are doing – YES. (new NPR article on Cahoots from 6/10/2020 - <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>)

Do I, many times a week see our Officers in what looks to be challenging situations in dealing with homeless or mentally ill people. Yes.

Should THEY be having those interactions – I'm not at all sure.

Thank You
David French
Ashland Or

Testimony #13

To whom it may concern,

I'm a local student, 21 years old, and a resident in ashland. I am a registered voter, and I do vote.

I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to info about CAHOOTS:

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From your local taxpayer,

Emma Blanco

blanco.emma.grace@gmail.com

Testimony #14

Greetings,

As a current Ashland resident who was born and raised in our sweet town, I have grown increasingly concerned about the lack of accountability Ashland is taking for the primarily white and often exclusionary environment we have cultivated in this town. Although I was never taught Oregon's atrocious racial history in school, I have dug into our state's past more deeply in my adult years and been absolutely horrified. While we cannot change the reality that blackness was largely *illegal* in this state for far too long and that blatantly racist Oregon laws were not abolished until shamefully recently, we do have power over how we move forward as a community.

It is incumbent upon us to work towards dismantling the systems that strategically oppressive people of color and vulnerable populations in Ashland. I believe that one such towards creating a more just community is re-allocating a portion of the funding currently reserved for the Ashland Police Department towards increased social services and the establishment of an alternative crisis response system for our town. While attending college in Eugene OR, I witnessed first hand the beneficial impacts of Eugene's CAHOOTS crisis response service. I learned that when a city has a resource to utilize during emergency/crisis situations that is an alternative to the police department, residents feel safer and more well cared for, incarceration rates decrease, and the city is able to save a significant portion of their safety budget.

Ashland is ripe for change and city wide action towards addressing our white supremacist beginning is long overdue. Adjusting our public safety priorities will not resolve the inherent inclusionary nature of our town, but it is certainly a first step. Thank you for your time.

Best,

Dana Greenblatt

Testimony #15

Hello,

I am a registered voter and I vote in all local elections. I also gather my wide friend network to host election parties to ensure we are making educated and informed choices when we vote.

I'm calling for the City of Ashland to redirect funds from the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area.

Here is a link to information about

CAHOOTS: <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>

Thank you,

Sarah Shaw
Ashland Resident

Testimony #16

I am a registered voter and I vote. I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS:

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Pauline Igo.

Testimony #17

Good morning,

My name is Elizabeth, and I am a resident of Ashland and a registered voter. I want to express a concern for the amount of funding that is currently being allocated to the Ashland Police Department. Our public funds express our values as a city, and I do not believe that our city should continue to over-invest scarce resources in the APD.

Policing plays a strong role in enforcing racism and social control of communities of color through disempowerment, displacement, and repression. The only solution is immediate and aggressive divestment from police funding and real consideration given to alternative public safety measures. Especially at this time of unprecedented crisis, we must invest our scarce resources in the health and well-being of our communities.

Funding toward life-affirming resources such as those related to housing, access to health care, and food security, must be prioritized. We must direct resources towards dignified temporary and permanent housing and rent relief, towards food assistance programs for people having trouble making ends meet, and to services provided by the library and Parks and Recreation. We must also use resources already allocated to the Police Department to invest in police accountability measures.

I urge you to invest in programs like the 31-year-old White Bird Clinic [CAHOOTS](#) program in Eugene. CAHOOTS, short for Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets, is a mobile, community-based crisis response program in which teams of medical professionals and social workers act as first responders to situations where the presence of law enforcement is not required. Calls of this nature include mental health crises, substance abuse, or homelessness. The program utilizes trauma-informed de-escalation and harm reduction, which reduces calls to police, averts harmful arrest-release-repeat cycles, and prevents violent police encounters.

The economic impact of COVID-19 requires a complete reimagining of how we allocate city resources, and makes clear the necessity for prioritizing investments in communities' health and well-being. The systems of policing and incarceration have no role in public health or safety; prisons and jails are vectors for the spread of COVID-19 and have always been antithetical to public health. Existing racial and economic disparities will only worsen in the wake of this ongoing crisis. We know that this virus is disproportionately affecting Black and POC communities & that this disparity is caused by racist systems that affect how and when people receive care.

This moment of reckoning with our nation's history of racist policing practices is an opportunity to rethink public safety in this city and reinvest in services that more effectively benefit our residents. We know that meeting the basic needs of our communities is the only way to ensure their health and safety.

Thank you,
Elizabeth

Testimony #18

ACES

Ashland Citizens for Economic
Sustainability
ter.net

www.ashlandACES.com

[ashlandaces@char](mailto:ashlandaces@charter.net)

June 15, 2020

Dear Mayor Stromberg and City Council:

Based on an optimistic forecast of revenues and federal relief funds, what the city has proposed is a short-term solution that does not tackle the city's long-term budgetary crisis. It is yet another attempt to put a band-aid on the structural deficit which the council refuses to address. Instead of making some difficult but necessary decisions you continue to just kick the budgetary can down the road and at the same time, providing little to no relief for Ashland citizens and local business.

First, the plan relies on unrealistic assumptions of cost savings in the police and fire departments. According to the most recent quarterly report, the department expenditures are close to or equal to budgetary goals, with overtime costs in the Fire Department running above budget.

In the spring AFR Chief Shepherd said AFR is at minimum staffing while publicly stating at the city's cost cut ad-hoc committee meetings that he needs to hire three more fire paramedics by next biennium, if the ambulance service is retained. The budget he presented shows the hires will cost an additional \$600,000 per year. To say the city will achieve savings of \$395,000 in the police personnel budget line and \$260,00 in the fire department personnel line will be extremely difficult and optimistic at best. No plan was presented on how the projected savings will be achieved.

Second, the outlined plan continues to draw down fund balances to pay debt to keep the lights on in the city. These funds have been collected from city ratepayers for specific projects or needed city repairs. Rather than addressing excessive departmental costs the city continues to rob Peter to pay Paul. In the past few years the city raided the Reserve Fund to bail out the Health Care Fund, took funds in the Reserve Fund to bail out AFN and raided the Facilities Maintenance Funds to bail out the Central Service Fund - which resulted in the City's failed \$8.2ml City Hall Bond this April.

In this plan, the city draws upon the following three other funds instead of making meaningful cuts in city expenses:

- It is suggested that balances in the Wastewater Fund to pay the portion of the wastewater treatment plant debt service that is now not covered by the Food and Beverage tax. It is irresponsible to divert any of the meals tax for Street Maintenance and reconstruction. This is not what voters approved and any change would de-legitimatize the election process that established this policy.
- A one-time budget transfer of \$553,000 from the Cemetery Trust Fund to pay for current expenses that may violate the trust agreement and will definitely increase general fund expenditures in future years. A transfer to cover expenses in the current budget means that cemetery expenses in the future will have to come out of the general fund.
- De-committing restricted reserves of \$900,000 from the Parking Fund meant for future parking supply to cover some of the shortfall from TOT revenues.

ACES strongly suggests the Council begin addressing the underlining budgetary issues with longer term solutions. Patching over problems and using budget gimmicks hasn't worked in the past and simply is not the answer. What needs to be addressed is Ashland has three times the number of city staff compared to other Oregon cities our size and salary and benefit costing taxpayers nearly \$140,000 per staff. A level that is excessive when compared with other cities and not sustainable for the Ashland taxpayer who forced to pay the bill.

Testimony #19

Mayor and City Councilors,

I offer these comments for your consideration as you meet on June 15-16 and into the near future:

Please closely examine the proposal to transfer funds from the Cemetery Fund. I realize your City Attorney tells you it is legal.

I understand the need to address PERS obligations into the future. I wholly oppose the current initiative by some to outsource the ambulance service. Know that many residents will push you to scrutinize the police department in the same way. The financial relationship between the Fire Dept and ambulance service is integrated; surrender one, we may lose both. The City has been lobbied heavily since fall 2019 by Mercy Flights. You are walking a risky path. The Council should realize that this attempt to separate the ambulance from the Fire Dept will financially weaken the Fire Dept, possibly to the point of crisis. It has certainly already stimulated a crisis in staff morale; members of the City Council are responsible for that.

Proposals on recovery from the Emergency and relief from PERS obligations must include the same kind of analysis of each department as Council has chosen in its ill-advised attack on our ambulance service. The public expects the City Council to conduct a serious analysis of the police department. While smaller, the Community Development and Public Works departments can realistically anticipate a period of decreased demand; perhaps ACES will ask you to outsource those next.

The Ashland Police Department has not been without its issues. While the current chief provides improved leadership, the calls for ‘defunding police’ must be heeded in Ashland, as they will be across the country. I don’t advocate complete defunding, change is critical. The Ashland Police Department’s staffing and budget are bloated as a result of political forces that wanted to present ‘clean’ sidewalks for tourists. In the past, that ugly initiative has resulted in front page ‘watch lists’ and vigilante actions. Local protests target existing political and municipal approaches and are calling for change. In the past year, when discussing an allegation that officers stalked a person living on the street, the chief told me that he wasn’t sure how to deal with that behavior without “hurting the morale of the officers.” Our officers are trained (in Academy and on the job) in a police culture that encourages objectification and fear of the public. Across the country they have failed to adequately self-police. I worked with the Mayor and an esteemed ACLU lawyer on bringing community policing to Ashland, but the department moved away from that and it is time for change.

The current national movement including Black Lives Matter has incredible support in Ashland. It is demanding that decision makers be held accountable; it will be no less in Ashland.

This is a difficult time. I appreciate your service.

Cate Hartzell

Testimony #20

Hello. Please allow my testimony in spite of being a few minutes late. I only found out about this yesterday and I am a working person with not much time outside of work and basic need fulfillment.

I have had to call the police because I feared for my safety one time in my life. I was 19, in an abusive domestic partnership and was being threatened and terrorized repeatedly by my much older partner. When they arrived, we were counseled that if charges were to be filed, they would need to file a report citing both of us for domestic disturbance, due to a recent law change meant to protect men from always being assumed to be the perpetrators of domestic violence. In a nutshell, I called for my safety and was told I was in trouble. That incident sealed the next four years of that life for me, knowing there was nowhere to turn if I wanted to change my terrible situation.

Recently my daughter, a 21 year old Ashland resident, reached out to Tighe O'Meara regarding an incident in her apartment complex parking lot in which a Latinx man was forced out of his apartment in his underwear and loudly berated by Ashland police. He never responded. The day he was seen holding the sign at the BLM solidarity action, she followed up with a second message, and he never responded.

The police are making our communities more dangerous for everyone, but especially for people of color.

Thank you,

Bree Sirdoreus

Ashland resident and registered voter

I'm calling for the City of Ashland to defund the Ashland Police Department and to adopt the CAHOOTS Program as so successfully modeled in the Eugene-Springfield Metro area. Here is a link to information about CAHOOTS: <https://www.npr.org/.../cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police...>