



CITY OF OREGON CITY CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Commission Chambers, Libke Public Safety Facility, 1234 Linn Ave, Oregon City
Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 6:00 PM

1. CONVENE MEETING AND ROLL CALL

Mayor McGriff convened the meeting at 6:03 P.M.

PRESENT: 5 - Commissioner Adam Marl, Commissioner Mike Mitchell, Commissioner Rocky Smith, Commissioner Frank O'Donnell, Mayor Denyse McGriff

STAFFERS: 3 - Assistant City Manager Alex Rains, Assistant City Recorder Evan Lee, Police Chief Shaun Davis

2. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

2.a. Future Agenda Items

Assistant City Manager Alex Rains went through the list of future agenda items.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

3.a. Fireworks Discussion

Asssistant Fire Chief Brian Stewart gave a brief overview of Clackamas Fire's operations with respect to the use and misuse of fireworks. This included inspections of fireworks sales locations, public safety messaging, and response to injuries and fires cause by fireworks.

Oregon City averaged about 3 fireworks-related fire incidents per year in Oregon City for the last 5 years. He did not have information about the number of injuries caused by fireworks in Oregon City.

Chief Davis said the only city in Clackamas County that prohibits the sale of fireworks is Milwaukie.

Commissioner O'Donnell asked how many citations the Oregon City Police Department had issued for fireworks. Chief Davis said none had been issued the past year. He said that all calls regarding fireworks on July 4th of this year were responded to by police that same night. However, he added that it can be difficult for police to give a citation for fireworks. This is because it is often difficult to determine which one person in a crowd of people set off the firework.

Mayor McGriff asked if the property owner could be cited for fireworks being set off at their property. Chief Davis said no. Only the person who set off the fireworks could be cited.

Commissioner O'Donnell recommended instituting the same rules that Happy Valley had. He felt that this was a livability issue. Large, loud fireworks were detrimental to war zone veterans, people with breathing issues, and pet owners.

Chief Davis said that, while Happy Valley's ordinance was comprehensive, police would still have to witness fireworks being set off to enforce it.

Commissioner Mitchell noted that several other cities had adopted the Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) on fireworks into their code. He asked Chief Davis if that helped with enforcement. Chief Davis said he would have to check.

Commissioner O'Donnell said the city should use the detailed language in the Happy Valley ordinance because it would make enforcement easier for police. He said the city should pass an ordinance well in

advance of the holidays, publicize the details, and then publicize the upcoming enforcement.

Commissioner Smith said that the city had fireworks at its own show this year, in violation of its current ordinance. He asked, what would it take to make this realistically enforceable, since the police have to see a violation to enforce any new rules.

Chief Davis said changes will not happen overnight. He said that one successful approach from Happy Valley was asking for illegal fireworks to be turned in no questions asked during a time of extreme fire danger. He said Happy Valley also had a fireworks class that people cited for fireworks could take to reduce their fine by 75%. That produced mixed results.

Commissioner Mitchell said that this will not happen in one year, but the Commission should still do it. The status quo is not reasonable and is a livability issue.

Mayor McGriff agreed that this is a livability issue. She added that even sparklers were dangerous and a problem.

Commissioner Marl said he came into this conversation with the goal of getting to yes on something. He was not at the point where he thinks the Commission had something it could pass that would make a difference. He argued that the status quo was better than an unenforceable ordinance. He quoted former Police Chief Jim Band, who said if you make it illegal, then you'll clog up 911 calls with people reporting neighbors for fireworks and people having emergencies might get missed.

Commissioner Marl also added that the city's 4th of July show did not use real fireworks.

Commissioner O'Donnell said that calls are prioritized. No officer will take a fireworks call instead of an emergency call. He argued that you can get witnesses to testify for enforcement. He felt the city should take the first step knowing it might take a number of years to achieve compliance.

Commissioner Smith said the police department should come up with a plan for this and let the Commission know how much it would cost. He said the Commission should not expect the police department to be able to implement new restrictions without extra funding.

Mayor McGriff noted that Portland had a full ban for two years. She thought it would be interesting to see what their results look like.

The Commission agreed to allow public comment on the issue.

Raymond Rendleman, resident of Oregon City, said he would like to see the Commission vote on a plan at their next meeting. He recommended voting on both the Milwaukie and Happy Valley ordinances.

Damon Mabee, resident of Oregon City, said that the city should not make a rule you cannot enforce. He stated that a ban would require more officers to work on holidays, which will cost the city a lot more out of its general fund. He said he is more bothered by gun shots in town on a regular basis. He felt that if the police could not stop gun shots in town, then it could not stop fireworks. He said the Commission needed to do something, even if that action is to say no ban.

Commissioner O'Donnell said the process should start with enforcement and let the courts handle it. He maintained that the city should ban airborne products, just like Happy Valley did.

Commissioner Marl said that doing this well will require looking at the police's collective bargaining agreement and the city's budget. He argued that cultural differences between Oregon City and Happy Valley meant this was not an apples to apples comparison.

Mayor McGriff said it would be worthwhile to hear from Portland and Milwaukie to know how their ordinances have worked. Commissioner Smith said he still wanted to hear the police department say how much this will cost.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if Chief Davis could bring this back at a regular meeting in October. Chief Davis said he would work with the city manager to bring it back.

The Commission took a break from 7:10 to 7:19 P.M.

3.b. 2025 4th of July Celebration

Mrs. Rains said staff wanted to know what the Commission thought of the 2024 4th of July Celebration and if they wanted to see anything different for 2025.

Mayor McGriff said the staff did an amazing job, especially given how quickly this was put together. The only negative feedback she had heard was about parking, and the smoke for the laser light show.

Commissioner Marl stated that he had asked to discuss this a year in advance to ensure that staff had more time to prepare.

Commissioner Smith added that if the city was banning fireworks, then the city should not have anything that even looks like fireworks at its event. He recommended paying for additional music or other entertainment to bridge the gap all the way to the laser light show.

There was discussion about whether the concert at this event should kick off the Concerts in the Park series and how many concerts should be part of the series.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if there could be booth space for nonprofits to engage the community.

There was consensus for staff to come back with an analysis of indirect costs and recommendations on booth space for nonprofits, how many concerts there should be, and how to fill the gap between entertainment.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioner O'Donnell

None.

Commissioner Smith

Commissioner Smith gave an update on the End of the Oregon Trail and Clackamas Heritage Partners. Corinne Lowenthal had been hired as the new Executive Director. She was meeting with city staff about how the city's facilities plan impacts the End of the Oregon Trail building. She had partnered with a local company to get the hoops repainted at no cost to the city and worked with Portland school to get school group visits. Commissioner Smith proposed having her make a presentation to the Commission.

Commissioner Marl

Commissioner Marl said the Youth Advisory Commission had their first meeting of the year. There were 13 total students.

Commissioner Mitchell

None.

Mayor McGriff

Mayor McGriff said that the South Fork Water Board had a meeting scheduled at the end of the month. Commissioner Mitchell asked if South Fork had discussed the emergency plan that the city passed recently. Mayor McGriff said not yet.

Commissioner McGriff said that the upcoming Water Environment Services (WES) meeting was to discuss the capital improvements plan. She would continue to ask questions about cost-sharing parity between the members of WES. The Downtown Oregon City Association (DOCA) had a main street training to keep certification and would have a strategic planning session meeting soon. The Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) would be meeting on urban growth recommendations. She

shared membership of the Courthouse ad hoc committee. The group would have an after-hours tour of the courthouse.

Commissioner Marl mentioned that it is now a crime to possess hard drugs in Oregon again. He hoped to see a positive impact from this change.

Mayor McGriff asked when the Community Court would be up and running. Chief Davis said it would take until at least January to put together the agreements, staffing, and grants. He added that Deputy District Attorney Bill Stewart had expressed interest in making a presentation to the Commission.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor McGriff adjourned the meeting at .7:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jakob S. Wiley", is written over a horizontal line.

Jakob S. Wiley, City Recorder

Date Approved: November 19, 2025