

MAYOR BELL'S 2025 DECEMBER UPDATE

With the flip of the calendar page, the winter holidays have officially arrived! Thanks to volunteers with Coburg Main Street the vintage Christmas decorations have been repaired, repainted and resealed so they can be enjoyed by the community for years to come. Thanks to all who volunteered time and talent to turn Pavillion Park into a winter wonderland just in time for the start of the Christmas events. Many homes and businesses are decked out with lights adding to the festive atmosphere and brightening our otherwise gloomy weather. I have never seen Coburg look so lovely!

Over the last two months I have had the opportunity to host three informal **financial update meetings**. These conversations have been focused on the financial constraints faced by cities, counties and government agencies across Oregon, why this is happening, what it means to Coburg and what we are doing to face this challenge.

- Measure 5 began to shape Oregon property tax revenue in 1990. This capped property tax at 3% per year based on the real market value of the property. It also set limits for money for schools and government. Prior to this, cities could adjust property tax rates annually based on what was needed to balance the budget. Now the only ways for cities to increase revenue is local option levies and increase fees for the services it provides to the community.
- Measure 50 was implemented in 1997 in an effort to correct financial inequities. This retained the 3% property tax limitation but changed the taxable amount from real market value to assessed value. (Take a look at your recent tax statements to appreciate the difference). While you're reviewing that tax bill, note the portion that goes to Coburg. You might be surprised because I was!
- Financial pictures across Oregon were still ok until:
 - 2008 financial downturn
 - Rapidly rising property values
 - 2020 pandemic with huge cost increases for goods and services. This means that general revenue increases by 3-5% every year but the cost of providing services increases by 10-15% annually.

GLOOMY WEATHER & DARK STREETS

Many of you may have noticed the brighter streetlights along Willamette Street and on neighborhood streets on the east side of town. In partnership with Pacific Power, we were able to replace aging and inefficient incandescent bulbs with energy efficient LED bulbs. This has the dual benefit of saving money as well as making many of our intersections and side streets safer for both cars and pedestrians. While the bulbs seem brighter due to the "whiter" light coloring, they are still preserving our night skies because of the fixture design as the source (bulb) is interior to the fixture. If you have questions or concerns, please contact city staff.



There are 241 cities in Oregon and 50% of them either have budget deficits (like Portland, Eugene, Springfield and Salem, to name a few) or are facing financial constraints. Since cities can't adjust property tax rates, the only way to balance budgets is to decrease staff, reduce services, request operating levies or increase fees to maintain services levels. The services most likely to be impacted by declining general revenue are park maintenance and public safety services. Rates for utilities (water and sewer) must be sufficient to cover costs, and money generated by the rates must be spent only on those utilities. This isn't just a good idea, it is mandated by the state.



WHAT IS COBURG DOING TO BALANCE THE BUDGET AND MAINTAIN THE SERVICES AND AMENITIES WE ALL COUNT ON?

We have decreased staffing costs by not filling vacant positions, utilize contract staff as appropriate, limited or delayed large projects, utilized grants to stretch funds and established new fees to maintain services and livability, to name a few. If you'd like more information, there will be more community meetings in 2026, or come to a City Council meeting or contact me at mayor@coburgoregon.gov.

Coburg is still a vibrant, livable and highly desirable community filled with wonderful, caring neighbors. We will weather this uncertain time as we have done in the past by reaching out and continuing to help others. Let's celebrate all the good things that make this community our home! Be kind, invite others to celebrate with you and enjoy this wonderful holiday season.

Your Mayor,
Nancy Bell

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Bell".

