



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 09, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Library Community Meeting Room
55 Academy Street, Lebanon, Oregon

MISSION STATEMENT

*We provide services that foster a resilient, safe, and growing community,
strengthened by our community connections*

Mayor: Kenneth Jackola

Council President Michelle Steinhebel | Councilor Dominic Conti | Councilor Carl Mann

Councilor Jeremy Salvage | Councilor David McClain | Councilor Dave Workman

PRESENT

Mayor Kenneth Jackola
Councilor - Ward 1 Dominic Conti
Councilor - Ward 1 Carl Mann
Councilor - Ward 2 David McClain
Councilor - Ward 2 Dave Workman (left after work session)
Councilor - Ward 3 Jeremy Salvage
Council President - Ward 3 Michelle Steinhebel

Staff

City Manager Ron Whitlatch
City Attorney Tre' Kennedy (online)
Chief of Police Frank Stevenson
Finance Director Brandon Neish
Community Development Director Kelly Hart
IT Director Brent Hurst
IT Administrative Assistant Erin Gomez
City Recorder Julie Fisher
Human Resources Director Angela Solesbee
Police Administrative Assistant Amy Waite
Police Lt. Ryan Padua
Police Lt. Taylor Jackson
Police Cpt. Kimberly Hyde

5:00 PM – CALL TO ORDER WORK SESSION

City of Lebanon Work Sessions are less formal meetings that enable the Council to focus on and explore in detail a topic with staff and/or consultants. Like regular Council meetings, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe work sessions. Unlike regular Council meetings, work sessions do not include public hearings or other opportunities for citizen comments. Should action be required, that topic would be brought back to the next available regular session, at which time citizens would have the opportunity to comment before a formal action is taken.

The work session was called to order at 5 PM.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Municipal Jail Feasibility Report - Chief Stevenson

During the meeting, staff provided a broad overview of the Lebanon Municipal Jail, including its history, operational challenges, status, and options for reopening. The presentation acknowledged Councilor Workman's persistent advocacy for the issue and the importance of having a shared understanding before exploring funding options.

The Lebanon Municipal Jail was originally constructed in 2009 with plans for full staffing, but due to funding limitations, it has never operated at full capacity. Patrol officers were used to manage the facility, which led to limited functionality and increased risk for both staff and individuals in custody. The jail handled misdemeanor offenses under the City's jurisdiction, typically with sentences of up to one year. The facility was temporarily closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and permanently shut down at the end of 2022 due to staffing and liability concerns.

The presentation highlighted troubling trends since the jail's closure. Misdemeanor cases and warrant issuances have significantly increased over the last five years, with a 30% rise in charged cases and a 52% increase in warrants. Most notably, failure-to-appear rates have grown steadily—from 68% in 2022 to 72% in 2023. Many of these are repeat offenders, and without the ability to detain individuals, the accountability system is significantly weakened. Staff time is being consumed by repeated paperwork, and there is no effective deterrent to ongoing criminal behavior, particularly for issues like trespassing.

Funding options for reopening the jail were outlined. The most viable appears to be an operations levy, which would require voter approval and cost approximately \$1.2 to \$1.3 million annually. It was recommended this be timed with the expiration of the City's general obligation bonds in 2027, potentially making it more acceptable to voters. Other less desirable options include increasing the City services fee or reducing other City services—both of which come with drawbacks and limited feasibility. The City is currently spending almost nothing on the jail, and a new levy would still cost less than current debt service rates.

Council members discussed the broader implications of jail closure, including impacts on community safety, quality of life, and city staff workload. There was agreement that if the jail is to reopen, it must meet current legal and insurance standards, which requires adequate staffing and resources. Staff emphasized that the former model—using patrol officers to run the jail—is no longer acceptable and exposes the City to liability.

While there are concerns about voter appetite for a new levy, there was strong sentiment that public safety and accountability are worth the cost. Staff committed to continuing work sessions throughout the summer to prepare for upcoming goal setting and to further evaluate priorities and funding strategies.

ADJOURN WORK SESSION

The work session adjourned.

6:00 PM – CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

The regular meeting was called to order at 6 PM.

CALL TO ORDER / FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Mayor Kenneth Jackola

Councilor - Ward 1 Dominic Conti

Councilor - Ward 1 Carl Mann

Councilor - Ward 2 David McClain

Councilor - Ward 3 Jeremy Salvage
Council President - Ward 3 Michelle Steinhebel

ABSENT

Councilor - Ward 2 Dave Workman

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar made by Council President - Ward 3 Steinhebel, Seconded by Councilor - Ward 3 Salvage.

Voting Yea: Councilor - Ward 1 Conti, Councilor - Ward 1 Mann, Councilor - Ward 2 McClain, Councilor - Ward 3 Salvage, Council President - Ward 3 Steinhebel

1. **AGENDA:** Lebanon City Council Agenda – July 09, 2025
2. **BOARD MINUTES:**
2025-01-15 Senior & Disabled Services Advisory Committee
3. **COUNCIL MINUTES:** 2025-06-11 City Council Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes
4. Updating Authorized Signers for City Bank Accounts

PRESENTATION / RECOGNITION

5. Presentation of Award - Officer McKinney

Officer Zach McKinney was recognized for his heroic actions on June 10, 2025. On that date, Lebanon Police Dispatch received an urgent call regarding a 32-year-old male who was unconscious. Officer McKinney, who was nearby, responded immediately. Upon arrival, he found the man unresponsive and showing signs of severe oxygen deprivation. He promptly directed medics to the location and began CPR after finding no pulse or breathing. He performed two full rounds of chest compressions before medics arrived. The man began breathing on his own as medics took over, and he later made a full recovery.

Officer McKinney's calm, decisive response and life-saving actions were instrumental in saving the individual's life. In recognition of his efforts, Officer McKinney was awarded the Life Saving Medal.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeff Holland spoke to the Council a positive note on taking care of yourself and being grateful.

Marilyn Belcher spoke to the Council on the importance of and Emergency Alert System and preparedness considering the recent lives lost in the Texas flooding. It was noted Brooke Bingham, a Lebanon graduate and meteorologist, is part of the National Weather Service and has served in the situation room in the White House.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

6. Consideration of appeal of Planning Commission decision for Code Interpretation CI-24-01.

The public hearing was opened at 6:12 PM.

Community Development Director Hart provided a staff report explaining that the interpretation was prompted by a proposed trail along the Albany Canal near River Park. If the area is annexed into the city, part of the trail would fall within the RL zone.

Staff determined that trails should be permitted in the RL zone based on several guiding documents. The City's Trails Master Plan, which is an addendum to the Parks Master Plan, identifies trails as part of the broader park system. The Comprehensive Plan also supports trail development, prioritizing connectivity for pedestrians and bicycles and integrating park uses with natural features. The municipal code further supports this by including trails within the definition of city parks. Based on these factors, staff concluded that trails should be categorized not as standalone "recreational trails"—a classification that is prohibited in the RL

zone—but rather as “other public uses,” including parks, recreational facilities, open space, and pedestrian amenities.

The applicant disagreed with this interpretation, arguing that the development code explicitly defines recreational trails as a distinct land use and that state law prohibits interpretations that conflict with the code’s express language. They also argued that the scope of the interpretation exceeded what is allowed under the applicable section of the development code. However, staff noted that the code also requires consistency with the comprehensive plan, adopted master plans, and other city standards. Staff cautioned that categorizing trails strictly under “recreational trails” would conflict with adopted policy goals and would prohibit planned trail development in multiple zones.

Staff acknowledged that the development code contains ambiguities and emphasized that the purpose of the code interpretation process is to provide temporary clarity until formal amendments can be adopted. Staff recommended that Council uphold the current interpretation that trails are permitted in the RL zone as part of the park system and initiate a code amendment to formally address the issue and resolve conflicting language in the development code. The interpretation would remain in effect until those amendments are completed.

Laura LaRoque, speaking in favor of the appeal, testified as the original applicant who requested the code interpretation. She explained that the city’s development code clearly lists recreational trails as a land use in the residential zoning table and that this designation should govern their permissibility. She emphasized that the city’s Trails Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan, while supportive of trail development, are aspirational documents and not substitutes for formal zoning allowances. She noted that the allocation of funding for trails by the City Council in 2014 was a policy decision and not a land use approval. According to her review of the Council’s meeting minutes and videos from that time, no zoning maps, parcel-specific plans, or land use analyses were presented when funding was approved—further underscoring her point that this was not intended to change zoning standards.

LaRoque also referenced past trail projects, such as Devil’s Rake Trail, Mill Run Trail, and Fields Landing, which were developed without going through proper land use processes, arguing that staff has a history of bypassing required reviews. She testified that this particular trail proposal came to light because it was located in the urban growth boundary, which is under Linn County’s jurisdiction. Since the County defers to city policy for projects in this area, city staff’s interpretation effectively guided the land use outcome. She noted that in communications with staff, the inconsistency in the code was described as a clerical oversight, but she stressed that any change to development code must follow a formal legislative amendment process—not a simple fix.

LaRoque expressed concern that the code interpretation, if approved, would not serve as a temporary solution, but rather would expose future trail projects to further appeals and extended legal review. She argued that interpretations do not resolve the core conflict in the code and that the correct path forward is a formal code amendment. She shared that she had offered to withdraw her application if staff committed to starting that amendment process and gave a specific timeline, but staff declined, citing workload and staffing limitations. She noted, however, that 210 days had passed since her application was submitted and that other code amendments had been processed during that time—suggesting that the trail-related amendment could have been done simultaneously.

In closing, LaRoque clarified that her position is not anti-trail, but rather a call for clarity and legal consistency. She urged the City to fix the error in the code rather than rely on a flawed interpretation process, pointing out that the city has long supported trails and would likely receive broad community support for a formal amendment. She expressed frustration that despite the issue being evident for many years, staff had not yet taken action to resolve it through the appropriate legal channels.

Rod Sell, President of Build Lebanon Trails, testified in opposition to the appeal. He began by thanking the Mayor, City Council, and staff for their service to the community and expressed his appreciation for their efforts. He stated that Build Lebanon Trails fully supports the staff's interpretation that trails should be allowed in residential zones, noting that Linn County, after reviewing similar information, also unanimously supported the ability to construct trails in those areas.

Sell emphasized that Build Lebanon Trails has been active in the community for 20 years, working to create multi-use trails that connect different parts of the city. He pointed out that many trails have already been built in the residential zones in question, setting a clear precedent for their permissibility. He specifically highlighted the importance of the proposed Georgia Pacific Mill Race Trail, which would provide a critical connection between the southern and northern parts of Lebanon. He noted that this section of town currently lacks access to the trail system, and this connection would link five city parks and extend all the way to Cheadle Lake. The trail would offer an off-street route across the community, significantly enhancing connectivity and accessibility.

In closing, Sell reiterated that Build Lebanon Trails not only builds but also maintains the trail system, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to community service. He expressed confidence that their track record reflects the value they bring to the city and urged the Council to support the continued development of trails within residential zones.

There was no further testimony. The public hearing closed at 6:34 PM.

City Attorney Kennedy acknowledged that the situation involves more than mere ambiguity; it presents a true conflict between the city's adopted plans. He explained that the comprehensive and parks master plans—which have been approved over many years—intentionally routed trails through residential zones. As such, the City Council, being the policy-making body, must weigh which document carries more authority. In this case, the master plan, with its clear intent for trail placement, was seen as the more specific and guiding document. Kennedy emphasized that the interpretation was legally sound and aligned with longstanding city policy. He added that even if the council were to side with the appellant, the end result wouldn't change since the development code is already slated for updates that would support the same conclusion.

Community Development Director Hart, City Manager Whitlatch, and council members echoed this reasoning. They acknowledged the inconsistencies within the development code but pointed out that numerous public bodies—including the Planning Commission and Parks Committee—had reviewed and approved the trails in residential zones. Hart explained that the purpose of the master plan was to create connectivity throughout the city and that, while the trails don't have to follow an exact route, their general placement was approved by previous councils.

Council members expressed general agreement that the development code needs to be updated for clarity and consistency. They stressed the importance of aligning the code with the comprehensive and parks master plans and committed to addressing these discrepancies soon. However, they saw no justification to delay the project or overturn the interpretation, especially given that the existing direction from council supports trail development through residential areas.

In conclusion, while there was consensus that the development code contains conflicting provisions that need to be resolved, both the staff and council agreed that the code interpretation provided was appropriate and consistent with the city's long-standing policy goals.

Motion to uphold the Planning Commission decision for Code Interpretation CI-24-01 made by Council President - Ward 3 Steinhebel, Seconded by Councilor - Ward 3 Salvage.

Voting Yea: Councilor - Ward 1 Conti, Councilor - Ward 1 Mann, Councilor - Ward 3 Salvage,

Council President - Ward 3 Steinhebel
Voting Nay: Councilor - Ward 2 McClain

REGULAR SESSION

7. Department Reports

Angela Solesbee, Human Resources Director reported 28 job postings and nearly 500 applicants over the past fiscal year, resulting in 15 new hires, 5 promotions, 15 separations, and 3 retirements. The City's turnover rate was 12.7%, slightly above the ideal. Job descriptions are being updated for compliance, and 2,260 employee trainings were completed, with a 94% on-time rate. Required trainings cover safety and legal topics, while newer ones focus on cybersecurity.

The department completed 41 performance evaluations, with 40 still pending, and passed an ODOT drug and alcohol compliance review. Exit interview data shows most employees were satisfied with work-life balance, compensation, and feeling valued. Common reasons for leaving included pay, growth opportunities, and commute. Most separations were voluntary, and 68% of exiting employees would recommend the City as an employer.

City Manager Ron Whitlatch reminded the Council of the Council meeting July 23rd at noon and a work session regarding the wastewater treatment plant. It was reported the City received a draft copy of the MPDS permit for review.

ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

There were no items from Council.

PUBLIC/PRESS COMMENTS

Sarah Brown with the Lebanon Local asked if the Council decided to move forward with a bond measure to fund the jail, what would be the back-up plan if the measure failed? City Manager Ron Whitlatch stated the discussion hasn't gotten that far, and although it would be a decision for the Council, if the voter's decided not to fund a jail, it is not likely there would be any continuation on the matter.

NEXT SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING(S):

2025-07-23 Regular Meeting and Work Session @ Noon.

2025-08-13 Work Session and Regular Meeting at 5 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM.