



REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Title: Resolution No. 17 for 2025: Certain Benefits Included in Official Compensation

Preferred Agenda: August 12, 2025

Submitted By: Blair Larsen, City Attorney

Reviewed By: Jason Ogden, City Manager

Type of Action: Resolution X Motion Roll Call Other

Relevant Code/Policy: N/A

Towards Council Goal: N/A

Attachments: Resolution No. 17 for 2025: A Resolution Defining Certain Benefits as Included in Official Compensation
OGEC Opinion No. 25-126A

Purpose of this RCA:

The purpose of this RCA is to request approval of the attached Resolution regarding minor fringe benefits and official compensation of City elected and appointed officials and staff.

Background/Context:

On May 9, 2025, Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) issued an opinion in response to questions asked by Jayme Pierce, General Counsel for the League of Oregon Cities. OGEC concluded it is unethical for a local government to provide food and beverages to elected officials or employees unless those items are included in their official compensation package.

Prior this opinion, it was the practice of the City of Sweet Home to provide snacks or light meals to City elected and appointed officials at meetings, retreats, team building exercises and other events. The OGEC opinion states that such benefits need to be adopted by the governing body as part of an official compensation package to comply with Oregon ethics laws.

To align City practices with the OGEC guidance, staff recommends that Council adopt Resolution No. 17 for 2025, which explains that meals, snacks and beverages provided during City business or at City events count as compensation for elected and appointed officials and employees.

The City already gives employees certain nominal benefits, such as recognition gifts or flowers during special occasions, which were established through normal administrative processes. Since Council is adopting food and drink benefits, staff recommends including these minor benefits in the resolution as well.

Finally, because these benefits will now be defined as “compensation,” recipients may have personal tax obligations. Since the value of the benefit varies from person to person, tracking is not feasible at the City level. Staff recommends encouraging recipients to consult their own tax advisor to determine whether any reporting is needed.

The Challenge/Problem:

How does the City comply with State ethics rules, while still providing minor fringe benefits to elected and appointed officials and staff?

Stakeholders:

- Sweet Home Residents – Residents deserve a City government that operates ethically and in compliance with State Law.
- Sweet Home City Council – The City Council is responsible for setting policies that bring the City into compliance with State Law and ethics rules.
- Sweet Home Elected and Appointed Officials and Staff – City elected and appointed officials and Staff should be able to receive minor fringe benefits such as snacks and food when attending long meetings or other required events.

Issues and Financial Impacts:

This ordinance does not mandate any spending and involves no financial impact to the City.

Elements of a Stable Solution:

A stable solution includes an ordinance empowers Police Officers to assist Library Staff.

Options:

1. Do Nothing – If the Council chooses to do nothing, then continuing existing City practices may violate State Ethics laws.
2. Motion to adopt Resolution No. 17 for 2025 as presented.
3. Motion to adopt Resolution No. 17 for 2025 with changes – The Council may make changes to the proposed resolution.
4. Direct Staff to research other ways to accomplish the same goals.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends option 2: Motion to adopt Resolution No. 17 for 2025 as presented.