



TUALATIN CITY COUNCIL

OFFICIAL WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

FOR DECEMBER 09, 2024

PRESENT: Mayor Frank Bubenik, Council President Valerie Pratt, Councilor Bridget Brooks, Councilor Maria Reyes, Councilor Cyndy Hillier, Councilor Christen Sacco, Councilor Octavio Gonzalez

Mayor Bubenik called the meeting to order at 5:55 p.m.

1. 2025 Federal Legislative Agenda Preparation.

Deputy City Manager Megan George and Thorn Run Consultants Dan Bates and Greg Burns presented the 2025 Federal Legislative Agenda. Consultant Bates reviewed policy themes for the city and the 2025 legislative agenda. At the state level, the focus will include funding for the seismic valving project, the Veterans Plaza Shade structure, and the electric vehicle charger's project. Manager George stated that staff will collaborate with community groups to secure letters of support for the funding requests.

Council provided suggestions for community groups to approach for letters of support.

Consultant Bates previewed the upcoming state legislative session, highlighting the governor's key priorities and proposed budget.

Council President Pratt inquired about the session's expected end date. Consultant Bates responded that it is anticipated to conclude in June.

Mayor Bubenik asked about a water infrastructure sub-committee that could assist with the seismic valve grant. Consultant Bates referenced a water-focused group working on policy, research, and funding.

Councilor Brooks inquired about behavioral health initiatives and educational opportunities. Consultant Bates noted the focus on workforce development and shared that updates on potential developments would be provided when available. Councilor Brooks expressed interest in strengthening connections between these efforts.

Consultant Bates introduced Consultant Greg Burns, who discussed the federal legislative landscape. Consultant Burns emphasized the importance of bipartisanship in legislative processes. He explained that while reconciliation bills allow for majority votes, most legislation will require bipartisan cooperation, particularly in the Senate, where 60 votes are necessary. He noted that effective governance would depend on a balance between legislative and executive actions, especially as the next election cycle approaches.

Manager George presented proposed items for the 2025 federal legislative agenda, including a funding request for the 65th/Borland/Sagert Transportation Improvement project. Other advocacy items included:

- Increased funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program
- Continued funding for the Community Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program
- Continued funding for the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) program
- Protections for local governments' ability to offer tax-exempt municipal bonds

Councilor Brooks noted that CDBG funding has not kept pace with original projections and asked about the scope for RCE funding in Tualatin. Manager George stated that no defined scope is available at this time.

Mayor Bubenik expressed concern about the potential lack of Republican support for increased CDBG funding. He suggested changing the language from "increase" to "maintain" to better align with political realities. He also raised concerns about potential threats to the CFI and RCE programs under the new administration.

Councilor Brooks advocated for incorporating innovation and technology initiatives into the agenda to appeal to business and economic interests.

Mayor Bubenik emphasized monitoring potential funding risks stemming from non-cooperation with federal policies.

Council President Pratt stressed the importance of the CFI program and regional rail connections. She asked if there were other areas of alignment with the administration's priorities, such as public safety, that could benefit the city. Consultant Bates responded that resilience is a recurring theme in federal discussions and could be leveraged as a positive narrative. He also noted themes from past administrations, such as opportunity zones, that may provide additional opportunities.

Councilor Hillier requested clarification on the term "resiliency" in this context. Consultant Bates explained it pertains to emergency management.

Councilor Reyes inquired about small business support in the agenda. Consultant Burns indicated that support would likely come through the tax code.

Manager George confirmed she would update the legislative agenda language based on Council feedback and present a revised version in January for adoption.

2. *Washington County Supportive Housing Services Annual Report and Discussion.*

Deputy City Manager Megan George introduced Megan Cohen, the new City/County Homelessness Liaison for Tigard, Tualatin, and Sherwood.

Council President Pratt asked how individuals in need can receive help beyond the 211 service. Liaison Cohen responded that she would be updating the city's resources and encouraged those in need to contact Community Connect for additional support.

Councilor Brooks expressed her appreciation for the new liaison role, noting that it will help advance conversations on homelessness in a meaningful way. She raised concerns about the lack of accessibility and services for diverse populations and asked if a community assessment of regional needs was being conducted.

Liaison Cohen introduced Washington County Strategic Projects Supervisor Jessi Adams and Strategic Initiatives and Relations Manager Nicole Stingh, who presented the third annual Supportive Housing Services (SHS) report. Manager Stingh shared that over 10,400 people have been served through SHS-funded services, with 1,200 individuals housed through SHS programs. She emphasized the development of a comprehensive system of care and highlighted the growth in support services between 2021 and 2024. Supervisor Adams reported that they are on track to meet goals for permanent supportive housing. She provided information on the populations served and highlighted partnerships with culturally specific providers to address diverse needs.

Supervisor Adams described the progress of their shelter program, which now includes 433 shelter beds and 60 pods. She noted that a year-round shelter is set to open in Beaverton and that additional pod shelter sites are being explored. She also discussed outreach and access initiatives, highlighting their impact in Tualatin, where 37 regional long-term rental assistance vouchers are currently being utilized. She acknowledged support for outreach partners like Just Compassion and detailed the healthcare case-conferencing program, which builds partnerships with 24 service providers. Supervisor Adams also shared updates on the Housing Careers program, which currently has 45 participants enrolled, and the newly launched Homeless Solutions Advisory Council. The council, which began in January 2024, provides feedback, conducts performance evaluations, offers lived experiences, and supports equitable procurement efforts.

Manager Stingh provided an overview of the program's finances, noting significant growth in services since FY 2021-22. She detailed the allocation of funds across program operations, regional planning, housing and service programs, and shelters. Manager Stingh reported a \$6.2 million decrease in the revenue forecast for the next fiscal year. She stated that while the impacts for the current fiscal year are not fully known, she stated that some programmatic investments may need to be scaled back to align with available revenue. She also expressed concerns about the proposed SHS measure from Metro, noting that it could negatively affect service provision.

Manager Stingh concluded by highlighting that Washington County has housed 2,941 individuals through investments from the voter-approved SHS measure.

Councilor Brooks asked for more information on how the SHS organization aligns with Washington County and connects to other county services. Supervisor Stingh explained that she works closely with the Community Development Department and that SHS is housed under the Department of Housing Services. Within Housing Services, there is also the Housing Authority, a federally designated entity that administers Section 8 and Housing Choice Vouchers. The department also serves as the development arm for affordable housing, owning, managing, and funding public housing and affordable housing developments. Additionally, the Homeless Services Division operates as the county's continuum of care—a federal designation—and implements SHS programs.

Councilor Brooks then asked about the deployment of outreach workers, specifically whether they would operate within Tualatin or remain office-based. Supervisor Adams assured her that outreach workers are actively engaged in the community and not confined to office work.

Councilor Sacco inquired about the proposed Metro measure and its potential impact on SHS programs. Manager Stingh explained that the department has been asked to prepare for a 30% reduction in operating capacity. She shared that the current program budget of \$100 million is already stretched thin, as the system was initially built for a \$130 million budget. With further

cuts, the department may face significant challenges, such as closing shelter beds, limiting support for project sites, and reducing outreach workers. Manager Stingh stated that these reductions could reverse progress made in addressing homelessness, including the current 35% reduction in unsheltered homelessness in the region.

Councilor Sacco also asked about the role of Medicaid funding in supporting SHS programs. Manager Stingh explained that SHS is working on enabling partners to bill Medicaid for eligible services. She stated while Medicaid funding presents opportunities, the process is complex and requires organizational expertise. The department is learning from other successful implementations in the state and is striving to build the capacity of its partners to access these funds.

Councilor Hillier asked if the proposed Metro bond measure would overlap with current SHS services and how potential funding reductions might impact the program. Manager Stingh stated that the specifics of overlap with the Metro bond are unclear but noted that regional efforts funded by SHS dollars might shift to Metro's purview.

Councilor Hillier also asked about services for Clackamas County residents. Manager Stingh praised Clackamas County's implementation of SHS, noting that they have fully utilized their vouchers and administer their version of Community Connect through the Health, Housing, and Human Services Department.

Councilor Reyes asked about the scope of SHS services, particularly regarding homeowners. Manager Stingh clarified that SHS serves renters exclusively and does not provide direct assistance to homeowners.

Council President Pratt inquired about access centers and their services. Supervisor Adams explained that access centers provide essential services, including laundry, meals, showers, and spaces to rest. They also offer co-located services, such as assistance with signing up for food stamps, dental care, and assessments.

Council President Pratt asked about options for individuals who wish to stay in Tualatin, Supervisor Adams directed her to Just Compassion, a local outreach partner.

Council President Pratt asked about the county's long-term housing capacity and whether it is sufficient. Manager Stingh responded that while additional housing is always needed, the primary challenges providers face in rehousing clients are related to behavioral health and acute needs, not housing availability.

Mayor Bubenik raised concerns about the proposed Metro tax increase and its potential consequences for SHS programs. Manager Stingh highlighted the vital progress made by SHS, including reducing unsheltered homelessness by 35% in the region. She warned that cuts to shelters and housing programs would likely lead to increased homelessness, affecting the broader community's livability. She also emphasized the importance of earning voter trust through continued program success, noting that much of the system's infrastructure, including access centers and transitional housing, is still being developed.

3. Council Meeting Agenda Review, Communications & Roundtable.

Moved to the regular meeting due to lack of time.

Adjournment

Mayor Bubenik adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Sherilyn Lombos, City Manager

_____ / Nicole Morris, Recording Secretary

_____ / Frank Bubenik, Mayor