



TUALATIN CITY COUNCIL

OFFICIAL WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 24, 2025

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

Mayor Bubenik called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

1. *Wedding Officiating Services.*

Court Administrator Cortney Kammerer requested Council approval for the Tualatin Municipal Court to perform wedding ceremonies. She stated the court receives requests throughout the year from community members inquiring about this service. Finance Director Don Hudson noted that several local jurisdictions provide this service but are unable to meet demand. He suggested approval for conducting cost recovery research and developing a fee schedule.

Mayor Bubenik inquired whether the Judge could take on this responsibility in addition to his current duties. Court Administrator Kammerer stated that the Judge has semi-retired from private practice and is available to perform ceremonies. Finance Director Hudson added that the service would be available by appointment only.

Councilors Hillier and Gonzalez expressed their support.

Finance Director Hudson and Court Administrator Kammerer will return to Council with their findings at a future date.

2. *Climate Action Plan - Implementation Funding.*

City Manager Sherilyn Lombos provided an update on options for sustainable funding to support a staff position dedicated to overseeing and managing the Climate Action Plan program and its funding. She explained that the project is housed in her office to enhance visibility and emphasize the interconnected nature of the work. City Manager Lombos reviewed the justifications for approving the position, highlighting the necessity of a dedicated staff member to analyze funding, implement the work, and collaborate with various departments and external partners. She noted that these findings were developed in collaboration with ECONorthwest, a recognized industry leader. She requested Council feedback on moving forward with one or more of the proposed funding options.

ECONorthwest Consultant Becky Steckler presented the findings of their analysis, detailing the tools used to determine two short-term funding options to support the position and provide modest implementation funds. The first option included a 0.5% increase in right-of-way and franchise fees, generating approximately \$327,000 annually. The second option proposed a 5% increase in building permit fee surcharges, generating roughly \$60,000 per year. Consultant Steckler also outlined long-term funding strategies, including a 1.5% increase in utility fees, a \$0.03 per gallon gas tax, and a 5% surcharge increase on transportation development.

Councilor Brooks expressed support for both short-term funding options. She inquired about the possibility of initially implementing the right-of-way (ROW) fee increase and asked what steps would be required to establish a franchise fee.

Councilor Sacco requested clarification on how the proposed 0.5% increase compares to other cities. Consultant Steckler provided examples of cities with similar processes and others that differ. City Manager Lombos added that direct comparisons are difficult due to varying factors among jurisdictions.

Councilor Sacco asked whether the staff position would be a full-time exempt role. City Manager Lombos confirmed that it would be.

Councilor Brooks voiced support for creating the dedicated staff position.

Councilor Gonzalez expressed concerns about the lack of data on the success of current projects. City Manager Lombos noted that the project scope did not include an evaluation of past initiatives.

Councilor Gonzalez stated that he does not support increasing taxes for constituents.

Council President Pratt thanked staff for their work and voiced support for moving forward with next steps. She suggested exploring an opt-in fee model similar to the one used by PGE.

Councilor Reyes echoed Councilor Gonzalez's concerns. She asked how the city could encourage community participation in ways that would not increase taxes, emphasizing the need to avoid placing additional financial burdens on lower-income residents.

Councilor Hillier voiced support for the creation of the staff position.

City Manager Lombos provided a high-level overview of the work done since October, emphasizing the need for a dedicated staff member to ensure accountability, establish metrics, and coordinate with community partners to keep the project on track.

Councilor Hillier expressed a preference for finding alternative funding sources that would have minimal impact on the community. Councilor Reyes echoed this sentiment, advocating for increased community engagement and a reduced burden on residents.

Councilor Brooks asked if additional fees could be charged specifically to Tualatin. Consultant Steckler explained that utility companies determine what costs are passed on to residents. City Manager Lombos clarified that Tualatin already has a franchise and ROW fee, which staff is recommending increasing by 0.5%.

Councilor Brooks voiced support for the fee increase, hoping it would eventually become self-sustaining.

Councilor Gonzalez referenced examples from Google searches regarding the elimination of gases.

Mayor Bubenik suggested working toward a consensus and asked for clarification on the gas tax. Consultant Steckler noted that further details would be addressed later in the presentation.

Mayor Bubenik inquired about the salary range for the proposed staff position. City Manager Lombos stated that the position would be at the Management Analyst or Program Manager level, with funding also allocated for hiring consultants.

Mayor Bubenik asked whether the intent was to increase the natural gas fee. Consultant Steckler confirmed that this option would be one of the quickest and simplest to implement.

Consultant Steckler presented long-term funding options including increasing the ROW fees by 1.5% which would generate approximately \$1.2 million annually. An additional option could be a 3-Cent Gas Tax that establishes a direct connection between emissions and their impact, generating approximately \$246,000 per year. The last option presented was a 5% Increase in Transportation Development Tax that would generate approximately \$70,000 annually.

Councilor Brooks asked for clarification on the potential uses of the funding and its flexibility. Consultant Steckler explained that increasing ROW fees offers the most flexibility, whereas the other options have more restrictions.

Councilor Reyes inquired whether the city could choose which utility companies to increase franchise fees on and sought clarification on which companies could implement the fee. Consultant Steckler stated that the fee must be implemented by the utility.

Mayor Bubenik asked if only one of the four franchise types could be affected.

Councilor Reyes sought clarification on the opt-in process and who would be impacted. Consultant Steckler provided an explanation, and City Manager Lombos suggested the option be included as part of the city utility bill, structured as a flat fee.

Council President Pratt stated that a gas tax would be inequitable. Consultant Steckler acknowledged the connection between gas emissions and the tax but noted the potential for residents to seek cheaper gas outside of Tualatin.

Councilor Sacco supported the flat fee opt-out option and asked if other cities had implemented similar measures, as well as their results. She expressed concerns about the inequitable nature of a gas tax and its impact on low-income residents. She voiced support for increasing ROW fees, as they appear more equitable and consistent.

Councilor Gonzalez asked for clarification on the green lodge tax. Consultant Steckler explained the limitations of their research scope and findings.

Councilor Gonzalez also questioned the age of the information and the lack of diverse data sources. Consultant Steckler noted the difficulty in finding the exact information he was seeking, as other cities conduct similar processes differently.

Council President Pratt suggested that a green lodging tax might be a more equitable option, as travelers generally have more financial capacity than low-income residents. She inquired whether the tax would be a burden on business owners. Consultant Steckler referenced Hawaii's success with the tax, where revenue increased due to the direct link between tourism and climate change impacts. City Manager Lombos clarified that 70% of lodging tax revenue must be allocated to tourism-related activities.

Mayor Bubenik expressed support for increasing ROW fees, emphasizing the need to minimize the impact on residents.

Councilor Reyes stated her preference for focusing on telecommunications and waste management fees.

Council President Pratt emphasized the importance of securing more funding beyond just covering the staff position.

Councilor Hillier raised concerns about ensuring equitable access to Wi-Fi for online learners, cautioning against measures that could negatively impact them.

Councilor Brooks noted that Tualatin should remain competitive with other cities in the market.

Councilor Reyes voiced her support for the staff position and asked whether building permit fees had been considered.

Council President Pratt supported increasing commercial building fees but opposed raising residential fees, citing the already high costs associated with residential construction.

Mayor Bubenik expressed concern about the volatility of building permit fees, noting that they are not a consistent revenue source due to the finite amount of land available for development.

Councilor Gonzalez reiterated his objections to tax increases.

Mayor Bubenik recapped that the Council is open to further discussion on commercial and industrial fee increases but does not support increasing residential fees.

City Manager Lombos thanked the Council and stated that she and Consultant Steckler would debrief and return with further recommendations at a future meeting.

3. *Proclamation Request.*

Mayor Bubenik stated that a proclamation request was submitted for consideration by NAMI in collaboration with Clackamas County. The Council unanimously voted in favor of the proclamation request.

4. *Council Meeting Agenda Review, Communications & Roundtable.*

Councilor Brooks stated she attended the Tualatin Parks Advisory Board Committee meeting and the Tualatin Arts Advisory Committee meeting.

Councilor Sacco announced she would be requesting the adoption of a proclamation for Transgender Day of Visibility later in the meeting.

Council President Pratt stated she attended the Clackamas County Metro Coordinating Committee meeting.

Mayor Bubenik stated he attended the League of Oregon Cities legislative update, the W.A. Board meeting, met with elected officials at the capital, and the birthday celebration for the Emperor of Japan.

Adjournment

Sherilyn Lombos, City Manager

_____ / Erika Pagel, Recording Secretary

_____ / Frank Bubenik, Mayor