

# Wilsonville City Council establishes legislative priorities with League of Oregon Cities

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Wednesday, July 22, 2020

<https://pamplinmedia.com/wsp/134-news/474530-383630-wilsonville-city-council-establishes-legislative-priorities-with-league-of-oregon-cities>

## Housing, mental health, franchise fees and technological access among the council's wish list

Presented with 26 options in a survey conducted by the League of Oregon Cities, Wilsonville City Council determined that housing, mental health services, technological access and franchise-fee authority are top legislative priorities during a work session Monday, July 20.

The LOC is surveying cities to gauge what local jurisdictions want the Legislature to address. It will then use the results to establish a legislative agenda and lobby for the enactment of policies preferred by cities during the 2021 legislative session.

Though it wasn't initially included as one of the four priorities, Councilor Joann Linville advocated for the imperative to expand technological access for diverse populations — and the rest of the council other than Councilor Ben West agreed.

The LOC said it will "partner with schools, healthcare, and other stakeholders to ensure technologies are relevant, available, affordable, and accessible," through this objective.

Linville noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequality among socioeconomic groups when it comes to access to technologies, which are needed for schooling, healthcare and other services.

"If we're talking about statewide issues, it's a crisis that's got to be addressed pretty soon. I also think there's a possibility there might be federal money coming down that could assist with this," she said.

West wanted to keep the priority to invest in housing and services but the council chose to include support for that objective as a note in its response letter rather than as one of its four recommendations. Part of the council's rationale for this decision was that it already included an item to expedite the siting for shelter and affordable housing.

Ideas LOC posited in this category include mirroring a California law requiring cities and counties to accommodate the need for emergency shelters without a conditional use permit and to "treat transitional and supportive housing projects as a residential use of property."

"This priority will empower cities and counties to proactively introduce alternative legislation, similar to existing statute in California, which requires jurisdictions to identify places where shelters can locate instead of mandating that jurisdictions allow shelters to be sited anywhere," the LOC writes.

In another top-four item, the city established that it wants to maintain authority to issue franchise fees and right-of-way access fees to telecommunications providers and other companies. The city has long held protecting local policy authority as a goal and this objective falls within that spectrum.

"Efforts to restrict local authority often include proposals for a statewide right-of-way access policy and compensation system as well as limiting the ability of cities to charge fees of other government entities," the LOC wrote. "This is contrary to local government management authority; the ability to enter into agreements with users of the right-of-way either by agreement/contract or ordinance; to set terms of right-of-way use and to set the rate of compensation."

The objective regarding the delivery of mental health services includes an investment in beds for mental health patients, jail diversion for people with mental illness, raising the price of low-cost and high-volume alcohol, and increasing mental healthcare access, among other things.

Unlike in 2019, the city did not include investing in infrastructure projects as a priority. This omission, according to Public Affairs Director Mark Ottenad and lobbyist Greg Leo, was due to the unlikelihood of major public infrastructure investments because of revenue shortfalls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of the way the item was written.

Still, Knapp felt the city should take a more optimistic view and Ottenad assured him that the city would be ready should such an opportunity arise. Notably, the Wilsonville government has tried for years to lobby the Legislature to build an auxiliary lane at the I-5 bottleneck near the Boone Bridge. So far the state has committed to conducting a cost-to-complete study for the project, which it needs to complete by next February.

"I guess I would like to be more of an optimist to think if there's an administrative change late this year that there might be significant investment in transportation, and I only don't want to be caught flat-footed with nothing prepared if we get into that scenario that might be more of a rosy outlook," Knapp said.