

Mayor O'Neil 9.15.2025 Opening Remarks at City Council

Good evening everyone.

Last week brought moments of deep loss and reflection — not only here at home, but across our nation.

Before we move forward with tonight's agenda, I want to pause and reflect on two of those: the passing of Wayne Lowrie, and the political violence our nation has witnessed.

Honoring Wayne Lowrie

This evening, I would like to honor **Wayne Lowrie's life** — as a **longtime resident, business owner, and pillar of Wilsonville.**

Wayne and his family **shaped the very roots of this city.** In 1959, the Lowries opened **Wilsonville's first grocery**, which grew into **Lowrie's Food King** — for years the largest employer in town. Wayne and his brother Terry joined the business and, just as importantly, poured themselves into **civic life for more than 30 years.**

In 1964, Wayne became a **charter member of the Wilsonville Jaycees**, which — with volunteer labor — built **the first fire station in Wilsonville.** Then Governor Mark Hatfield dedicated the station. Wayne and his brother Terry became **volunteer firemen.**

In 1968, Wayne and his brother were instrumental in **incorporating the City of Wilsonville.** In 1970, when the Wilsonville Cooperative Kindergarten lost its building, Wayne

and Terry took on the project of **building a new facility with the cooperation of the school district**. It was **dedicated by Governor Tom McCall** and later **won an international award for best community development project in the world that year**.

Wayne was a **charter member and President of the Rotary Club of Wilsonville**, and together with Terry was named **Citizen of the Year in 1988**.

The Lowrie family's commitment did not stop there. Their leadership touched many parts of Wilsonville. Wayne's father, **Bill Lowrie**, went on to serve as **Mayor of Wilsonville**, championing **the community center we still enjoy today**.

Wayne's life is a reminder that **much of what we take for granted in Wilsonville — our schools, our fire protection, our civic traditions — came from neighbors who rolled up their sleeves and built it together**.

On behalf of the City and our community, I extend our **deepest condolences** to the Lowrie family including his wife Shirley, daughters Kathy and Karie (Caree), and son Ken as well as all of Wayne's friends.

At this time, I would ask that we observe a **moment of silence** in Wayne's honor. [pause] Thank you.

And now, in recognition of **Wayne's remarkable life of service**, please join me in a round of applause to celebrate him.

[applause, pause]

Statement on Political Violence

Wayne's life reminds us that the strength of Wilsonville has always come from people who choose **SERVICE over division** and **BUILD bridges instead of walls**. His example is especially meaningful as we reflect on the tragic violence our nation has witnessed over the last couple of years.

Political assassination is an ATTACK on democracy itself — no matter who the victim is or who carries it out. These acts are never justified. They leave families grieving, communities shaken, and, most painfully, they leave our children scarred.

This year alone we have endured too much: the assassination of political activist Charlie Kirk in Utah a few days ago; the assassination of former Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband in June; and other acts of political and social violence across our nation.

Each of these wounds cuts deep.

When children here in Wilsonville saw not only a **killing unfold in real time**, but also the wave of **angry commentary** that followed on television and social media, I knew I had to speak — because **silence in the face of violence sends the WRONG message**, and our children deserve better.

No single statement can capture the full pain this violence has caused across our country.

What we can do — **HERE, together** — is recognize the underlying danger: destructive words and rising anger that can trigger more violence.

When young people see violence on the news or on social media, and then hear adults respond with **blame and bitterness**, it sends a dangerous message.

In this case, Wilsonville's children saw Mr. Kirk's assassination online before parents could even prepare them for that conversation — including me, as a father.

And in those same moments, social media was filled with anger and blame. But here in Wilsonville, we can model a BETTER example — one of respect, patience, and listening — so our children see that dialogue can HEAL rather than divide.

That is why I felt it was time to speak.

Words matter. They can either HEAL or divide, CALM or inflame.

And history reminds us that the call to **LOVE our neighbor** and **FORGIVE** even when it is hard remains one of the most powerful guides we have.

And let me be clear: my **RESOLVE is not selective**. Whether it happens in Utah, Minnesota, Oregon, or anywhere in this nation, **political violence against anyone is an ATTACK on ALL of us.**

My decision to speak tonight is not about **personalities or politics**. It is about our children and grandchildren — and breaking the cycle of rhetoric that can lead to more violence.

Here in Wilsonville, we are at our best when we choose to live the **Wilsonville Way** — showing respect, working together, and listening even when we disagree. It means leading with both head and heart, and putting people above politics.

We've done well as a community, but moments like this remind us we can always do better — especially when it comes to being role models for the next generation.

As we reflect on these tragedies, I hold close the values of **love, acceptance, forgiveness, and humility** — timeless virtues, not always easy to live by, but essential if we are to heal, to protect our children, and to move forward together as a community and as a nation.

As your Mayor, I want to make sure our community continues to model a different path — one of **constructive dialogue, not destructive rhetoric**.

My heart goes out to every family who has suffered the pain of political or social violence.

Let us keep them in our hearts and prayers — and let us honor them by recommitting ourselves to words and actions that reflect the very **BEST** of who we are.

Thank you.

Turning now to our work session:

PRE-COUNCIL WORK SESSION [5:10 PM]

- A. Parks and Recreation Department Staffing Assessment (*Ammerman*) [35 min]
- B. Public Safety Project Update – Solutions for Graffiti Abatement and Adding Administrative Warrants Process (*Guile-Hinman/Young*) [40 min]

ADJOURN [6:25 PM]

The work session is adjourned. The City Council will meet in executive session pursuant to Oregon Revised Statutes Section 192.660, subsection two, paragraph f Exempt Public Records and paragraph h- legal counsel/litigation to consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of the City with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

Members of the public outside of representatives of the news media, please exit Council Chambers.

5 MINUTE BREAK

Break to switch Zoom accounts [5 min.]

EXECUTIVE SESSION [6:30 PM]

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