



CITY OF OREGON CITY JOINT WORK SESSION WITH THE CITY OF WEST LINN MINUTES

22500 Salamo Road, West Linn, Oregon 97068

Tuesday, January 17, 2023 at 6:00 PM

CONVENE WORK SESSION AND ROLL CALL

West Linn Mayor Rory Bialostosky called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

PRESENT: 8 - West Linn Council President Mary Baumgardner, West Linn Councilor William Relyea, Oregon City Mayor Denyse McGriff, Oregon City Commissioner Frank O'Donnell, Oregon City Commissioner Adam Marl, Oregon City Commissioner Mike Mitchell, Oregon City Commissioner Rocky Smith, West Linn Mayor Rory Bialostosky

STAFFERS: -

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Council President Baumgardner, seconded by Councilor Relyea, to approve the agenda of the January 17, 2023 Joint Work Session.

Councilor Relyea requested that the agenda's I-205 Tolling and Diversion Plan Discussion be moved to the Joint Meeting.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yea: 8 – Council President Baumgardner, Councilor Relyea, Mayor McGriff, Commissioner O'Donnell, Commissioner Marl, Commissioner Mitchell, Commissioner Smith, Mayor Bialostosky

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Robert Henderson, resident of West Linn, explained that he is a member of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in West Linn, and objected to the City's plan to exercise eminent domain on the church's property. He cited a 2001 LOT issue in which the City had collaborated with the church to acquire the needed land, and requested that the City pause the issue, wait to see how circumstances develop with Highway 43, and collaborate with the church to find a solution instead of exercising eminent domain.

Tony Brocco, resident of West Linn, expressed concerns relating to the intersection at Hidden Springs and Cedar Road in the Robinwood neighborhood. He requested permission to present concerns in more detail at a future West Linn City Council work session, and he invited the Councilors to a future meeting of the Robinwood Neighborhood Association. He argued that the proper public process had not been followed in regard to this matter. Mayor Bialostosky offered to discuss organizing a presentation opportunity with the City Manager, and Council President Baumgardner expressed interest in attending the upcoming Robinwood Neighborhood Meeting.

JOINT MEETING WITH OREGON CITY COMMISSION

1. I-205 Tolling and Diversion Plan Discussion

Dean Sur, resident of West Linn, and author of the IP-4 "Vote Before Tolls" Initiative, discussed his work to create a retroactive ballot measure requiring a vote of the people before road tolls are enacted in Oregon. He expressed concern about the Environmental Impact Report, and about the maintenance of roads onto which extra traffic would be diverted in the case of I-205 tolling.

Robinson Foster, resident of West Linn, and volunteer with the IP-4 Initiative, asked the Councilors for their endorsement of the initiative. He argued in favor of offering more transportation choices in the area, including more use of freight trains and Willamette River transportation. He also shared that he had sent a document of "Choice Before Tolls" transportation diversity ideas for the Council's consideration.

Paul Edgar, resident of Oregon City, suggested that the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) ought to offer road construction options to reduce I-205 bottleneck issues instead of rushing to a tolling project, and that input from regional residents and City governments ought to be included in a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment.

Dave Farmer, resident of Willamette, expressed concern about diverted traffic on an already-congested I-5, and argued that Oregon citizens ought to have the right to vote on tolling schemes. He also expressed concerns about ODOT's lack of response to citizen questions about tolling, about the lack of a time limit on the tolling scheme, about safety issues arising from traffic diversion, and about the expense of tolling for Oregon families.

Mayor McGriff expressed concerns about ODOT's lack of communication in response to questions about tolling from the Oregon City government. She observed that the tolling program was among the less visible elements of HB 2017, and that the cities of West Linn and Oregon City would be more affected by the tolling program than any other communities in Oregon. Mayor McGriff suggested discussing next steps to address the potential tolling program, including fostering collaboration with other local governments. She suggested collaborating with West Linn's lobbyist for assistance in communicating with the State government.

Councilor Relyea suggested forming an ad hoc coalition group with representatives from the communities affected by the tolling program. He suggested that this group could discuss tolling alternatives and solutions to traffic congestion, including creating a connection between McLoughlin Boulevard and Highway 213, and changing the Arch Bridge into a pedestrian and bicycle bridge and adding a new transit and vehicle bridge.

Mayor Bialostosky observed that no ODOT policies seemed to address any input received from local communities about the tolling program. He also expressed support for Councilor Relyea's coalition group suggestion, and for Mayor McGriff's suggestion to draw on the aid of West Linn's lobbyist. Mayor McGriff and Commissioner Marl suggested that the aims of Councilor Relyea's proposed group were appropriate and could be implemented by the preexisting C4 Group and the C4 I-205 Diversion Subcommittee.

Commissioner Marl addressed those who had offered public comments, telling them that since testifying virtually is now allowed at State government sessions in Salem, they ought also to share their concerns with the State government whenever these issues are being addressed there.

Council President Baumgardner emphasized that the tolling program originated with the State government, not with ODOT, and agreed that both individual citizens and City governments ought to focus on addressing their concerns to the State.

Doug Riggs, lobbyist with Northwest Policy Advocates, reported that he was currently en route from a meeting of the Joint Committee on Transportation in Salem, and that several members of that committee, including Senator Aaron Woods, Senator Lew Frederick, Senator Jeff Helfrich and others, had expressed concern about the lack of communication from ODOT to local communities affected by the tolling program.

Mayor Bialostosky asked Mr. Riggs to describe the Tolling Relief Act, a piece of legislation for which the City of West Linn is lobbying. This act would cap tolls for local residents at \$2.00 per day or \$10.00 per month and would reserve a specific amount of tolling revenue for traffic diversionary projects in local communities.

Mayor McGriff observed that other allies against the tolling program could be found in the Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium, the Oregon Mayors' Association, and the Oregon Metro Council. She reiterated that these organizations were concerned about ODOT's failure to answer questions about the tolling program.

Commissioner O'Donnell expressed concerns about the efficacy of proposed traffic mitigation projects, citing the current level of traffic between West Linn and Oregon City. He also expressed concerns about the impact of the tolling project on the local real estate market and community livability. He voiced the possibility of pursuing legal action against ODOT through the League of Oregon Cities.

Mayor McGriff invited Councilor Relyea to discuss the impact of the tolling project on the South Fork Water Board. Councilor Relyea asked the Oregon City Commission for a letter of support for legislation that would require ODOT to recognize the fact that the City of West Linn has lost 50% of the life cycle of its existing water line as a result of ODOT's need to replace the Abernathy Bridge and that ODOT should compensate the City of West Linn for this loss. Councilor Relyea said that he would ask the South Fork Water Board to request a letter of support from the Regional Water Providers Consortium. Mayor McGriff said that she had no objection to this and suggested that the item be added to both the South Fork Water Board's next meeting agenda and to the next Oregon City Commission meeting agenda. Mayor Bialostosky observed that the City of West Linn was facing a cost of \$13 million to replace their water line on the Abernathy Bridge as a result of the I-205 project, and that the City's total budget is about \$100 million.

Commissioner Smith expressed his support for Councilor Relyea's proposal. He expressed support for collaboration with more local governments and for exploring more traffic mitigation ideas (though he was not ready to support closing the Arch Bridge to vehicular traffic).

Commissioner O'Donnell expressed support for Mr. Relyea's suggestion, adding that since ODOT required the expense, ODOT should help pay for it.

Commissioner Mitchell expressed agreement with Commissioner O'Donnell's suggestion to consider legal action against ODOT. He suggested that ODOT may be failing to answer questions about traffic diversion because ODOT has no workable solution. Mayor McGriff observed that traffic diversion is already an issue in Oregon City and West Linn and that ODOT has not responded to that observation when presented with it.

Mayor McGriff offered to open communications with the League of Oregon Cities regarding the possibility of a lawsuit against ODOT.

Commissioner Marl expressed support for exploring the possibility of a lawsuit but reminded the Councilors and Commissioners that the Oregon legislature had already twice voted in favor of tolling, and that efforts should be directed toward interventions that would address legislators. He also reiterated that the C4 Group and the C4 I-205 Diversion Subcommittee were the proper organizations for cross-community collaboration on the tolling issue.

Council President Baumgardner observed that the League of Oregon Cities would be hosting City Day in Salem the following week, an event which she and Mayor Bialostosky would attend, and that this would be a valuable opportunity to express the united concerns of West Linn and Oregon City.

2. Houseless Strategy

Mayor McGriff observed that the State of Oregon had declared a state of emergency regarding houselessness, and that she was concerned that land use planning for implementing houselessness mitigation might fall to the cities without help from the State. She shared that the Oregon Mayors' Association (OMA) is making houselessness a legislative priority and that they want the Oregon legislature to fund cities directly for addressing houselessness. Mayor McGriff discussed the "Crisis Focus" document she had drafted with the Oregon City Planner regarding what Oregon City would do if they were to receive direct State funding for addressing local houselessness. She encouraged the City of West Linn to create a Crisis Focus document.

Councilor Relyea suggested working with school districts to identify facilities that could be used as shelters in the case of inclement weather. He suggested this could be a valuable first step for connecting people with resources.

Mayor Bialostosky said that the City of West Linn had not yet been contacted by OMA regarding addressing houselessness as a legislative priority but that he would work with City staff to pursue this.

Councilor Baumgardner observed that though houselessness might not be occurring in a significantly visible way in West Linn, it was important to be proactive in addressing the issue.

Paul Edgar, resident of Oregon City, reported that he is a member of the Clackamas County Community Action Board and the Veterans Advisory Council. He discussed the success of the Veteran Village that recently created in Clackamas. He discussed the need for more professionals trained in outreach intervention, and the need for dedicated facilities to bring people in crisis and suggested addressing these needs proactively.

Mayor McGriff reported that the Oregon City Commission would be discussing the placement of a downtown public bathroom at their next meeting. She reported that previous such facilities had unfortunately been destroyed by users. She also mentioned that the County had opened a few cooling shelters during the previous summer and suggested exploring which facilities had been used for this purpose. Mayor McGriff also mentioned that people facing houselessness in other jurisdictions continued to be brought to Oregon City for aid and that she hoped additional cities would help address this need.

Commissioner Marl expressed a need for better regional collaboration about housing needs. He reemphasized Mayor McGriff's point that Oregon City is being asked to provide a disproportionate amount of social services and that neighboring communities ought to share the burden. He observed that the location of the county jail places more burden on Oregon City as well.

Mayor McGriff remarked that the OMA's proposed funding package would allocate \$40.00 per resident to reach its funding goal. There was a question about whether this was one-time funding or not, and Mayor McGriff offered to check with OMA to find out.

3. Mental Health

Mayor Bialostosky invited discussion about how the West Linn and Oregon City could obtain more mental health care resources for their residents. Mayor McGriff observed that veterans had recently become entitled to mental health care at any hospital regardless of insurance. Council President Baumgardner added that veterans could access this service even if not enrolled in the VA (Veterans Affairs) program.

Mayor McGriff emphasized the need for more mental health care providers. Council President Baumgardner suggested that the CTE (Career and Technical Education) Programs in high schools might have a role to play in encouraging more people to enter the mental health care field. She also asked Commissioner Marl if he had particular suggestions regarding how West Linn or other neighboring jurisdictions could help share some of the social services burden with Oregon City. Commissioner Marl

replied that he did not have a comment specific to West Linn but that he felt people in crisis need to have access to resources within their own communities, instead of being transported to some other community before they can receive help.

Mayor McGriff asked whether any interest had been expressed in opening a day shelter in West Linn. Mayor Bialostosky replied that, to his knowledge, no such interest had been expressed, but that he was willing to bring the matter back as a discussion topic for the West Linn City Council.

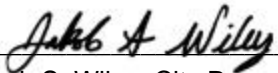
Councilor Relyea agreed with Mayor McGriff's comments about mental health care workers' case overload. He also remarked on untreated mental health conditions in the incarcerated population and spoke in favor of redirecting funding from the prison system toward mental health care.

There was discussion about scheduling a follow-up joint meeting to discuss progress on the items from today's meeting.

ADJOURN JOINT MEETING

Mayor Bialostosky adjourned the joint meeting at 8:32 P.M

Respectfully submitted,



Jakob S. Wiley, City Recorder