



MINUTES

Monday, May 10, 2021
Work Session
Remote

Approved: July 14, 2021

Call to Order

Mayor Alex Johnson II called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Councilors present: Mayor Alex Johnson II and Councilors Dick Olsen, Matilda Novak, Stacey Bartholomew, Ray Kopczynski, Bessie Johnson, and Marilyn Smith

Councilors absent: None.

Business from the Public

4:00 p.m.

None.

Comprehensive Plan and Development Code Priorities, Part II

4:00 p.m.

Community Development Director Jeff Blaine presented the staff report. He said that working on housing affordability will involve a look at what other communities have done and how it can be adapted for Albany. Staff can also look at how Albany's development code affects housing costs.

Councilor Bessie Johnson said work on housing affordability would take a lot of staff time from other priorities. Blaine said that the community has been very vocal about wanting to have a conversation about housing affordability.

Councilor Matilda Novak said that one of the reasons she ran for city council was the issue of housing affordability. She expressed willingness to head a housing task force.

Johnson II said that housing affordability is a priority for him as well and noted the level of community interest in the topic. He suggested that the council determine its top housing affordability issues, create a focus group of five to seven people for each issue, then have those groups present to the council.

The council agreed with the top three priorities as recommended by staff in the May 4, 2021, staff report.

City Services Fee Rate Discussion

4:25 p.m.

City Manager Peter Troedsson provided background and presented the staff recommendations found in the agenda packet.

Troedsson, Finance Director Jeanna Yeager, and IT Director Sean Park gave the following responses to questions from the council:

- The proposed fee would go into the general fund to provide flexibility to meet emerging needs. The council could designate percentages of the fee to go to certain uses, but that would prevent flexibility in the future.
- Staff is currently collecting data on how many residents are getting assistance with their electric bill or are receiving other non-city utility related assistance. According to the American Community Survey, Albany has about 2,459 households below the poverty level, most of them renters. Approximately 700 homeowners would likely be eligible under the new program.
- The new low-income assistance program would likely be unavailable until December 2021. If the proposed fee is implemented in July, individuals would have to qualify under the current low-income assistance program to get assistance in the intervening months. The council could choose to not implement the proposed fee until the assistance program is ready.

- Landlords who rent to low-income individuals would pay the multi-family per EDU rate as listed in the staff report.
- Like the current program, individuals would need to apply yearly for the proposed low-income assistance program.
- Approximately fifty cities across Oregon have implemented a fee similar to the proposed city services fee.

Johnson said that she does not think the council has a choice. She reluctantly supports the nine-dollar option.

Councilor Marilyn Smith asked if staff could estimate how many households would qualify for the low-income assistance program. Troedsson spoke about the proposed phases of implementing the assistance program.

Novak said that she is not ready to implement the fee until there is something equitable in place for households affected by COVID.

Councilor Dick Olsen said that he thinks the nine-dollar charge is good and that the city does not have much of a choice.

Councilor Stacey Bartholomew said that the city is attempting to be as transparent as possible about the fee. She said she is not committed to a certain fee level yet.

The council asked staff to move forward with the base rate set at nine dollars.

Business from the Council

5:04 p.m.

Novak read into the record an email* from a constituent about the city services fee.

Johnson II asked staff to look into a report of people camping behind Maple Lawn Apartments. He also asked for an update about the effort to merge city advisory boards.

City Manager Report

5:12 p.m.

Troedsson responded to the letter that Novak read into the record and spoke about the cost of the desired level of services in the community.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Gabriel Shepherd
Recorder

Peter Troedsson
City Manager

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. Documents from staff are posted to the website after the meeting. Documents submitted by the public are available by emailing cityclerk@cityofalbany.net.*