

**City of Lowell, Oregon**  
**Minutes of the City Council Regular Session**  
**August 15, 2023**

The Regular Session was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mayor Bennett.

**Members Present:** Mayor Don Bennett, Gail Harris, Maureen Weathers, Jimmy Murray

**Member Absent:** Tim Stratis,

**Staff Present:** CA Jeremy Caudle, Public Works Director Max Baker, Library Director Peggy O’Kane

Mayor Bennett made a change to the agenda. He requested Lowel Rural Fire Protection District Chief Lon Dragt speak before the meeting.

**Chief Dragt** gave an update to the Council regarding the Bedrock Fire and the impact it has on the city. He stated that though there has been some justified concern, the fire has not placed the city in immediate danger. The fire district has seen a threat for the residents in the upper part of the Fall Creek area, which was responded to. The Oregon State Fire Marshal has supported the district by sending four task force teams to specifically respond to the structure protection. There is a shelter at the Lowell High school cafetorium to support the level three evacuations. Daily there are meeting held with the fire teams and all the stake holders in the area. The Lane County Sherrif will be the coordinator of any evacuations. Chief suggested that when summer starts, we should consider ourselves as level one. That preparing the documents and items that may need to be gathered in a minute’s notice would be a good plan.

**Councilor Harris** inquired as to the size of the fire and how fast it is growing.

**Chief Dragt** instructed the council on the practice of back burning to help to control the fire. Back Burning also causes smoke and will show that the fire is growing. This is a productive tool to gain control of the fire. Though it does increase the size of the fire.

**Councilor Harris** made a comment that people are anxious.

**Chief Dragt** stated that the department is planning on hosting a town hall meeting with emergency management teams to answer questions and offer tools for the possibility of a natural disaster.

**Councilor Weathers** stated that she likes the idea of a follow up town hall, that will give the information after the fact so that the citizens can better understand.

**Chief Dragt** stated that along with the Sherrif Department they have created parameters for different scenarios that could involve any evacuations.

**Citizen** asked about possible handouts available the town hall meeting.

**Chief Dragt** stated that he would have those available at the town hall meeting.

**Councilor Murray** brought up how there were people who received notifications for a fire out of the area and did not receive the notification for the fire that is nearby.

**Chief Dragt** encouraged all to get signed up for Lane Alerts. The goal of the Alert notification is to notify only the people who are in the chosen area. The specific evacuees who needed to know and not necessarily the homes miles away who are not yet affected. The notification that Councilor Murray mentioned was inadvertently sent too wide. That is there is a level 2 or 3 notification the Sherrif would go door to door to inform the residents.

**Public Comments:** None  
**Council Comments:** None

**Presentation by State Representative Charlie Conrad,** House District 12 with a discussion of the 2023 legislative session

- Served on Judiciary Committee, Behavioral Health/ Health Care Committee, Emergency Management/General Government/Veterans Committee
- Over 200 bills per each committee this past session
- 2970 measures were introduced by both houses.
- 775 came to the house floor for a vote.
- 616 measures were passed both houses.

Representative Conrad was one of 24 freshman legislators this year. Tackled big issues, such as reproductive rights, gun bills and many other.

Protecting tenant rights

Passed the opioid bill that will make Naloxone available to everyone funded by a settlement with the drug companies.

Measure 110 – held evening meetings with stakeholders. Representative Conrad Supported. He felt that it would place someone accountable at the Oregon Health Authority.

Criminalize small amounts of Fentanyl.

Gave a synopsis of his other duties and experience.

Bill 3214 was a housing bill on Urban Growth boundaries failed initially but will be brought back in short session.

Was able to get capital funds and was able to get approval for Lowell wastewater plant \$356,000.00. HB 5506 waiting on the Governor's signature.

**Councilor Murray** said thank you to the Representative.

**CA** asked the Representative what his advice would be to a small organization to make sure we are taking advantage of the grants.

**Representative Conrad** answered that it gets back to the staff ability that you have. He stated that when he comes across these types of grants, he sends them out. He is more than happy to help and to advocate.

**CA** comment- stated that he truly appreciates the interest that the Representative and his office have taken in this community. How important for the community to realize how big this grant is and how big of a deal this is for us. He appreciates how the representative recognizes that what works for Eugene and Salem won't work for Lowell and other small communities.

**Representative Conrad** stated that he is going to be on a task force for funding and grants for non-profits.

#### **City Administrator Report:**

- There have been several requests for pre-application meetings for development projects. The first land use application since the council approved the new development code has been received, for a lot line adjustment.
- August 8, along with Mayor Bennett, met with the new superintendent of the Lowell School District, Scott Yakovich
- Scheduled a meeting in September with our IT consultant. To review the cyber coverage application for tier two coverage through CIS. Tier two has a coverage limit of \$200,000, while our current tier one coverage has a \$50,000 limit.

- The responses to the RFP for auditing services is due August 21. CA sent an email to everyone on the State Audit Division's list of registered municipal auditors.
- On August 7 and 8, the Public Works Director and CA conducted a code enforcement review throughout the city. Identifying over 200 violations from over 100 properties.
  - Most were minor violations such as tall grass, tree limbs over sidewalk, unscreened dumpsters, etc.
  - More significant issues noted were bags of trash piled up with apparent rodent infestations, large parcels of property that are overrun with blackberries and weeds, a few single-family residences that are overrun with blackberries and weeds, and a few houses that violate the city's "Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings." The latter comprise houses that have structural issues and appear unsafe for habitation.
    - The latter comprise houses that have structural issues and appear unsafe for habitation.
  - Numerous residences that have shipping containers on their property. In my reading of the city's minimum building appearance standards, shipping containers are not allowed.
  - Plan is to direct it would be helpful to communicate this in the next edition of "The Bridge" to better educate the public.
  - For the less serious issues, an informal violation notice will be sent. The informal violation means that the city is not going to pursue enforcement currently; however, the city reserves the right to pursue enforcement in the future if the situation continues or worsens.
- Attended the League of Oregon Cities' small cities meeting here in Lowell. I would like to thank Mayor Bennett for setting up the meeting room prior to the meeting, as well as cleaning up afterwards. During the meeting, LOC staff summarized the outcome of this year's legislative session.
- The Blackberry Jam Festival Committee met on August 8. The committee reviewed lessons learned from this year's festival.
- The city decided not to apply this year for the Department of Transportation's Small City Allotment grant. It was decided it's best to spend the next few months reviewing our transportation needs in collaboration with the City Council. It also appears that the pavement preservation plan from 2019 was not approved.
- Have not yet had the opportunity to draft an assistance program for solid waste service. This is on the to-do list.

**Councilor Weathers** had a statement regarding repairing 1<sup>st</sup> street; that possibly there should be more information given as to what all is involved to get the repair of the road completed.

**Councilor Murray** stated that there has been significant comments regarding the code enforcement, and he appreciates the thorough update on the code sweep and would like there to be follow up brought to the council, particularly of the more egregious violations.

- CA stated that the staff would be having a conversation and planning in the event of an evacuation incident.

**Public Works Report:** gave an update regarding the city's response to the Bedrock Fire. Lowell is able to sell water for the operations and to accept and treat the hauled gray water that comes

from the showers, handwashing and kitchen only. There are 6-8 loads of gray water a day from the camps. Fire Hydrant had to be replaced at Tumac last week.

- East 1<sup>st</sup> street update- the paving is a set amount; the road needs to be rebuilt in a few spots. The issue is the unknown costs. The water line was repaired in an emergent situation to get water to the residents. The location of the break and the water undermined a sewer line. So, without digging that up there is no way to tell how extensively the line is damaged. There is the dig out and the put back those costs. Its not just the paving its reinspecting and possibly repairing the water line, sewer line, road and sidewalk.
- The city is not responsible for recreation on the on Dexter Reservoir, the advisories used to be put out to the public by the Army corps of Engineers. They would do testing and if there was an active bloom they would post. The city does test every other week but have had all no detects since May 1, 2023.

### **Library Director Report:**

Library Director Peggy O’Kane submitted a report on the statistics for the Maggie Osgood Library for July and for the year so far.

- Currently:
  - 5,796 items in the catalog.
  - 267 Library cards have been issued.
  - 1053 items have been checked out.
- July:
  - 255 materials added.
  - 28 new patrons added.
  - 234 total checkouts
  - 266 visits to the library.
  - 84 program attendance
- July activities:
  - Summer reading program
    - We had 57 children signup in June and July.
    - The tracking sheets are due back to the library in mid-August.
    - Held two activities a week for children. The events were well attended.
    - Children took home collages, rocket ships and other creations from the craft times.
  - Volunteers
    - 10 active volunteers and another half dozen awaiting background checks.
    - Besides their regular library duties, volunteers also put in long hours preparing and staffing the used book sale held over Blackberry Jam weekend.
      - The sale brought in over \$700.00. These funds will be the main portion of our budget to buy new materials in FY 23/24.
  - Applied for and received a \$2,500 grant from the Roundhouse Foundation to purchase capital items including an end panel for one section of the stacks, more book ends/supports and a second book truck.
- Future:

- Post regularly to the City’s Facebook page.
- Preparing a brief electronic newsletter to be distributed to the library patrons who gave us their emails. Planning to have this start at the beginning of September.
- Volunteer Sherry Carter is leading a project to create a 2024 calendar like the ones Maggie Osgood made. The 2024 the calendar will feature old Blackberry Jam posters. There will be more about the project in the August Bridge.
- Joined the Oregon Library Association Public Library Division Board.

**Old Business: None**

**New Business:**

Councilor Harris Made a motion to appoint Joshua Annis to the Budget Committee. This was seconded by Councilor Murray. **PASS 4:0**

Councilor Weathers made a motion to appoint Marisa (Meesa) Anders to the Parks Committee. Seconded by Councilor Murray. **PASS 4:0**

**Other Business:**

Councilor Murray made a motion to appoint Public Works Director Max Baker to serve as City Administrator pro tempore during the City Administrator’s absence from August 30 to September 6. Seconded by Councilor Weathers. **PASS 4:0**

Councilor Weathers made a motion to approve a memorandum of understanding with the Lowell/Fall Creek Education Foundation to accept a \$5,000 grant for caboose repairs and to authorize the City Administrator to sign. Seconded by Councilor Murray. **PASS 4:0**

**Mayor Comments: None**

**Councilor Comments: None**

**Community Comments:**

**Bob Burr 566 E 1<sup>st</sup> St.-** Complimented the Mayor on his attendance at functions. He attends many city events in town and out. Compliment him on the fact that he is doing a heck of a job!


**Jackie McNeel 616 E 1<sup>st</sup> St.-** asked questions re the 1<sup>st</sup> street main break. Who is responsible and will we have to take out loans.

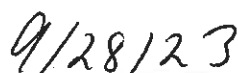
CA responded that though the potential cost of a loan to repair 1<sup>st</sup> street is included in the budget the likelihood for that need is not very high . Secondly, the city’s position is that Charter communications and their subcontractor are responsible for the damage and should be responsible for the repair costs. The city’s intention is not to place any of this expense on the citizen or rate payers.

**Adjourn: 8:31 PM**

Approved:   
Don Bennett, Mayor

  
Date

Attest:   
Jeremy Caudle, City Recorder

  
Date

