

**CITY of LA GRANDE
COUNCIL RETREAT**

**Tuesday
January 26, 2021**

6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

*You can view the Work Session on Facebook Live at the following link:
www.facebook.com/CityofLaGrande*

*The purpose of the Annual Council/Staff Retreat is to exchange ideas with Staff and establish Goals and Priorities for the upcoming year. The Goals/Manager Priorities then become the focal point of budget development for the 2020 ~ 2021 Fiscal Year. Council decisions are not made during a Council Retreat; but, rather, direction is provided to Staff in connection with the identification of the Goals to be scheduled for adoption during the February 3, 2021, Regular Sessions of the City Council. **While the Annual Retreat is open to the public, public comments will not be entertained during the Retreat.** Members of the public are routinely provided with an opportunity to engage the Mayor and Council during the Public Comments portion of each Regular Session Agenda.*

Per ORS 192.670(1), Councilors Members will be participating in this Work Session by electronic communication.

1. **CALL to ORDER/WELCOME** 6:00 p.m.
~Stephen Clements, Mayor

2. **CITY RETREAT TOPICS/SEQUENCE**
(Please Refer to Attached)
~Robert A. Strobe, City Manager

3. **MANAGER'S TOP PRIORITIES**
(Please Refer to Attached)
~Robert A. Strobe, City Manager

4. **ADJOURN** 8:30 p.m.

Kayla M. Rock
City Recorder

City Council Retreat Topic List/Sequence and Goals and Priorities January 26, 2021

(Note: Items in **blue** are intended as informational topics as opposed to those requiring Council guidance and direction. Text in **green** is supplemental/background information that may be helpful.)

Vision Statement: The City of La Grande is the economic, educational, recreational, and cultural hub for eastern Oregon, with a family oriented, small-town character. (City’s current Vision Statement with the goals NOT specifically related to Economic Development **highlighted** below)

Goals to support our vision:

G1	Enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.
G2	Take full advantage of the benefits of our thriving educational community, anchored by Eastern Oregon University.
G3	Promote the natural beauty and resources of the Grande Ronde Valley, which provide recreational opportunities and quality of life benefits that complement our economic development objectives.
G4	Showcase La Grande as a culturally-rich city with a strong sense of identity, pride, and environmental awareness that preserves our heritage.
G5	Foster a family-oriented community with high quality amenities, including excellent parks, safe neighborhoods, and outstanding schools.
G6	Champion public involvement and civic leadership that values economic, ecological, and social stewardship, while maintaining our small-town character.

1. Budget Related Issues/Fiscal Management

a. General

- i. What are the baseline budget priorities for the coming year?
- ii. Validate continuation current services and programs at a minimum.
- iii. Continue practice of conservative capital investments/maintenance using existing fund balance in General Fund to avoid reductions.

The intent of this item is to identify if there are any significant shifts in direction from the City Council. Typically, the City will continue to provide the same core services and programs as in prior years. Specific requests for changes that may impact these services submitted by Councilors or Staff are identified as individual points in the following sections. Note item 1.a.iii. stems from prior discussions and the work of the Fiscal Review Committee regarding how to prioritize spending and help address capital needs.

b. Under Levy City Council perspective

- i. Validate continuation of Urban Renewal Agency (URA) Under Levy.
 - 1. Based on current City General Fund ending Fund Balance for 2019-2020 the City could forego an Under Levy in 2021-2022 and use Fund Balance to cover reduced property tax revenues.
 - a. This would impact other taxing jurisdictions, so if the Council decides not to under levy or significantly reduce the amount of the

under levy we would want to notify the other jurisdictions immediately following the February Council Meeting.

i. Could impact County decision on funding level for Library.

2. Amount of an Under Levy drives both General Fund and URA Budgets.

Of note the County increased support for the Library from the historic \$20,000 a year to \$40,000 a year following the practice of under levying and the City asking them to do so. From the City's perspective, an under levy provides increased funds that can be allocated to meet current needs. Some of those funds have been dedicated to providing increased economic development activities outside the URD. Absent the under levy, the revenues to the City would be decreased until such time as the URA ceases levying taxes.

c. Fire Revenues

i. Fire and EMS Revenues: We have not revised our Ambulance rates for a number of years and believe they should be increased to reflect increased costs. Additionally, we would like to explore tiered rates to account for the fact that while we provide Advance Life Support (ALS) ambulance services to the entire County, only City of La Grande property taxes are used to fund the service. We will also look at other potential cost recovery options. It is important to note that for certain ambulance calls we are limited in our reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid and increasing our rates may not affect those calls.

If the City Council is open to pursuing these changes, we would prepare a detailed proposal and schedule a Work Session to discuss in more detail in advance of implementation.

d. Current Fiscal Year COVID-19 Expenditures

i. Note the City Council adopted a Budget that included significant funding related to COVID-19 and a \$500,000 contingency. Currently we are consolidating expenditures into two lines in the Council/City Manager Budget related to these expenditures and will be preparing a Resolution late in the fiscal year to transfer funds from contingency to these lines. This includes payments that were made to return funding to Business Oregon for grants that were not able to be paid to businesses due to stringent requirements. Even though the City received funds from Business Oregon and has been reimbursed for some of the COVID-19 related expenses, under Oregon Budget Law we must transfer funds from contingency to avoid expenditures exceeding appropriations. This is an informational item only.

2. Infrastructure/Capital Expenditure Related

a. Street Infrastructure:

- i. Street conditions are a recurring topic and concern raised by citizens to the Council and Staff.
- ii. Current funding is not adequate to maintain the current road network in La Grande.
- iii. Public Works has developed a five-year plan for maintenance and improvements within the current resources, but it does not solve the situation.
- iv. Public Works has been successful in obtaining larger grants for larger projects but these are few and far between.

- v. Should the City move forward to form a separate committee or task the Parking Traffic Safety Street Maintenance Advisory Committee to study options and return with recommendations regarding stable funding?
 - 1. Gas Tax?
 - 2. Transportation System Development Charge?
 - 3. Other

If the City Council is open to exploring this topic, we would seek guidance regarding the Council's intent, specifically whether to have the PTSSMAC or a separate committee develop the recommendations. We would plan on a Work Session upon completion of the review or earlier if there is additional guidance needed or further discussion warranted before proceeding.

b. Building needs:

i. Police Department Building.

- 1. Recent improvements to the building have helped address the situation but the long-term needs for a larger facility remains.
- 2. Engagement with the new Sheriff and the County Commissioners as part of the planning process will be important.

3. Staffing

The Staff is seeking initial thoughts from the City Council regarding the potential of increasing staff in the areas indicated below. This Retreat discussion is helpful for setting budget priorities. Final decisions regarding any changes would become part of the Budget adoption process.

a. Library

- i. Staff safety is an increasing concern on Saturday's given the importance of having two people in the facility at all times. Should we:
 - 1. Add two 19 hour per week library page positions to help assure coverage?

b. Information Technology

- i. The City needs additional IT resources beyond the current levels provided by the IMESD under the current agreement. Should we:
 - 1. Increase hours?
 - 2. Hire full-time staff?
 - 3. Add full-time staff and retain some level of IMESD service given the wide array of issues and time required to provide the function?

c. Police Department

- i. The workload on the one employee that manages and processes public records requests (as well as reception) has continued to increase. The new requirements for providing public records, which are not optional, has reached the point where it is beyond the capacity of existing staff to meet and requires additional staffing. Should we:
 - 1. Increase staffing by adding one FTE?

d. Succession Planning:

- i. The City has been and will continue to experience significant turnover due to retirements in the management team and upper end of technical employees. This isn't intended as a topic of discussion but an acknowledgement that this remains an area of concern and emphasis.

4. Planning

a. Review of existing regulatory standards.

- i. **Historic District Standards:** The City is eligible to apply for its bi-annual Certified Local Government Grant (CLG Grant), by late February 2021, and the Landmarks Commission is seeking the City Council's support in applying for such grant to update the City's Historic District Standards.

1. The Historic District Standards were written in 1999, as "guidelines" at the time the Downtown Historic District was established.
2. In 2009 the "guidelines" were changed to standards by Resolution of the City Council. This was after significant Urban Renewal and State grant investments were made towards historic preservation in the downtown and the regulation were/are intended to help protect such investments.
3. The conversion from "guidelines" to "standards," however did not include significant regulatory edits, thus many standards are recommended, suggested or implied, but are not clear.
4. Staff would like to have the Council make a decision on pursuing the CLG Grant at the February Council Meeting; following a Joint Work Session with the City Council and the Landmarks Commission tentatively scheduled for February 1, 2021, to discuss the issue.

ii. Requirements Review

1. Should the City pursue a review of the City controlled requirements which impact development?
 - a. Is the current regulatory environment discouraging businesses from locating to La Grande or encouraging businesses to relocate to other areas?
 - b. How do the costs of development impact recruitment and retention?
 - c. How do these costs compare to similar communities?
 - d. How does the timeline from application to permit approval compare to similar communities?

If the City Council is open to exploring this topic, we would seek guidance regarding the scope and Council's intent and then schedule a Work Session to discuss in more detail in advance of moving forward if needed or plan on a Work Session upon completion of the review.

b. Housing

- i. **Comprehensive Housing Production Strategy (HPS)**—following the adoption of the Housing Needs Analysis, the City must adopt an HPS to comply with HB 2003.
 - 1. The State has provided technical grant assistance to La Grande for developing an HPS to address the following WITHIN La Grande:
 - a. Low income/affordable housing (e.g. work force)
 - b. Middle to upper income housing for professionals (recruitment)
 - c. EOU student housing and multi-family housing
 - d. Upper floor downtown housing
 - e. Potential Zoning Code changes
 - 2. During the adoption process the City may want to consider targeted incentives such as:
 - a. Reduced fees
 - b. Tax abatement for new development (phase in property tax)
 - c. System Development Charges (SDC) and System Buy-In.
 - d. New transportation SDC that could provide funds for infrastructure in support of certain projects (and not just housing)
 - e. Formation of new Urban Renewal District(s) to provide housing incentives
 - f. Public-private partnerships where the City helps fund or participates in new infrastructure construction.

c. Flood Plain/FEMA Map Revisions—Land Use Impacts Informational Item

- i. City Council will conduct a public process to update Stormwater Master Plan and requested updates to the Floodplain Map.
- ii. Also, the City needs to update Floodplain portion of Code following FEMA updating the map, assuming approvals, likely two years out.

d. Commercial Land Needs Analysis and Comprehensive Plan Goal 9 Update

- i. This is necessary to support Economic Development efforts but is a Planning Department function to update and the City should pursue grant funding to hire a consultant.

5. Housing/Homelessness (separate from considerations addressed above under Planning)

- a. What is/should be the City’s role regarding addressing issues related to this topic?
 - i. Participation or formation/leadership of an ad-hoc committee?
 - ii. Requesting/hosting a forum with local agencies and organizations involved with housing and homelessness?

6. Poverty

- a. What role can/should the City play in efforts to alleviate causes of poverty locally (education, family stability, training, housing, jobs, drug addiction, etc.)?

7. Public Engagement and Communication

a. Youth Involvement in City Government—Ex-Officio Appointments, Collaboration with School District:

- i. Councilor Lillard has been working on this issue for some time and forward momentum was impacted by COVID-19. The question is do we move forward or not, and if so, when?

b. What are the Council’s expectations regarding our public communications strategy including social media presence and website revisions given no dedicated public relations or in-house IT staff?

i. City Web Site

1. The City needs to update the web site and Staff is in the process of moving forward with this as an action item.

- #### **ii. Social Media:** The City Manager and some departments have Facebook pages with varying levels of outreach success as means of dissemination of public information. Parks and Recreation and the Library are the two most effective at present. We currently do not have official texting for important or emergency notifications to residents.

c. Committees and Commissions

- i. Encouraging participation in Advisory Committees and Commissions.
- ii. Increasing diversity and community participation on Commissions and Committees.

8. Service/Program Related

a. Recreation Center:

- i. Where are we in the process?
- ii. Next steps?

b. Island Avenue Landscaping.

- i. [Parks/Urban Forestry intends to continue improving the Island Avenue corridor landscaping by planting trees from Mulholland Dr. to Island City.](#)

c. Greenway:

- i. Island City has turned down grant funding to complete the next phase of the trail.
- ii. Should the City proceed with planning and funding an extension of the Greenway trail on properties the City already owns?
- iii. This would likely be a loop pathway that would return on itself so there is no “dead end.”

d. Library policy changes

- i. The Cook Memorial Library currently pays for a variety of services that are offered free to library card holders. Some of those services are used by non-City residents. Staff would like to require a paid membership for non-residents to use these added cost services.

- ii. The Staff and would like to join a nation-wide trend and eliminate charging overdue fines for equity reasons/lowering barriers to access.
- iii. Currently the County provides \$40,000 per year towards the operations budget for the Library. We do not anticipate this change would impact this funding as we would still provide core services to County residents free of charge.

9. Partnerships

a. Tourism Promotion

- i. The agreement with the Chamber runs through 2023. We are experiencing a reduction in TRT revenues which will reduce the pro-rata distribution for this service. It is the City Manager’s recommendation to allocate the entirety of the funds previously dedicated to Blue Mountain Conference Center to the Chamber to reduce the impact. (\$17,405 in the current Fiscal Year)

This is primarily an informational item given the Chamber is required to present their annual budget and program of work to the City Council and the County for review and approval. At that time this will be discussed in more detail.

b. La Grande Main Street Downtown

- i. The Agreement with LGMSD expires in June, 2022. Under the agreement they are required to maintain the Performing Main Street level status as well as raise a minimum of \$25,000 each fiscal year. With the COVID-19 restrictions, they were unable to hold Beerfest, their major fund raiser and the City Manager conveyed to LGMSD that the City would not require that fundraising requirement for 2020. In addition to these requirements, the agreement contains the following, highlighted additions:

LGMSD shall serve as the primary and initial point-of-contact to assist the URA and the City of La Grande in resolving downtown disputes and issues to include, but limited to:

- a. Downtown parking*
- b. Downtown street furnishings*
- c. Downtown cleanliness and attractiveness*
- d. Downtown festivals, parades, promotions and events*
- e. Downtown pole banners and holiday decorations*

Any downtown parking or traffic related issues and/or any proposed changes must come to the City of La Grande only after LGMSD has appropriately determined there to be a consensus among downtown stakeholders supporting a proposal and the LGMSD Board of Directors has officially rendered a recommendation based on the needs, desires and benefits of downtown La Grande as a whole.

- ii. Should the City ask LGMSD to address their 2021 fundraising status as well as provide an update on their efforts to formulate a Board of Directors’ recommendation on proposed changes, if any, to downtown parking?

Any specific expectations from the City Council would be conveyed to the LGMSD Board in the form of a request, that they be addressed during the annual report that is required under the current agreement. These reports are typically done in a Work Session format.

10. STEM education/Science Center

- a. Should the City explore a feasibility study for a science center in La Grande to provide STEM education/Science Center programs?
 - i. Considerations include the City’s role, other partners, timeline and funding.

11. Wildland Urban Interface

- a. What actions should the City, in concert with Union County and other agencies take to assure La Grande is prepared in the event of a wildfire such as the ones that devastated communities in 2020.
 - i. Ad-hoc committee?
 - ii. Forum to discuss current emergency plans and educate the Council and public?
 - iii. Other?

If the City Council is interested in exploring this in more detail it is recommended the first step be a Work Session with a presentation from County Emergency Management and the City of La Grande Public Safety regarding current measures that are in place and activities that have occurred over the past couple of years before moving forward.

City/District Manager's Top Priorities

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

(Approved by City Council February 2020)

- **Fiscal management:** Continue to manage the City's finances within limited resources to provide highest possible level of service to the City of La Grande.
- **Economic Development:** Continue to implement the Urban Renewal Plan and economic development strategy as approved by the City Council/Urban Renewal Agency.
- **General Fund Capital Improvements:** Identify funding sources and strategy to address major capital needs.
- **Housing:** Complete the Housing Study adoption process and commence activities to develop and adopt a Comprehensive Housing Strategic Plan.
- **FEMA Maps and Land Use Code Amendments:** Complete the public process and submittal to FEMA for updating the City's Floodplain Maps, and complete the revisions and adoption of the City's Land Use Codes as necessary.
- **Staffing:** Develop a plan to address critical staffing issues including, but not limited to hard to fill positions and succession planning for key positions.

City/District Manager's Top Priorities

Fiscal Year 2021-2022

(To be Approved by City Council February 2021)

Note: red underline text is suggested edits as a starting point for revising the current Top Priorities that will be finalized during the Retreat

- Fiscal management: Continue to manage the City's finances within limited resources to provide highest possible level of service to the City of La Grande.

- COVID-19 Recovery: TBD

- Economic Development: Continue to implement the Urban Renewal Plan and economic development strategy as approved by the City Council/Urban Renewal Agency.

- General Fund Capital Improvements: Identify funding sources and strategy to address major capital needs.

- Housing: Complete the Comprehensive Housing Production Strategy (HPS) and upon completion and adoption, implement the strategy. ~~Complete the Housing Study adoption process and commence activities to develop and adopt a Comprehensive Housing Strategic Plan.~~

- FEMA Maps and Land Use Code Amendments: Complete the public process and submittal to FEMA for updating the City's Floodplain Maps, and complete the revisions and adoption of the City's Land Use Codes as necessary.

- Staffing: Develop a plan to address critical staffing issues including, but not limited to hard to fill positions and succession planning for key positions.