

**Lowell City Council**  
**Work Session**  
**Saturday, August 26, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.**

**Lowell City Hall Conference Room**  
**70 N. Pioneer St., Lowell, OR 97452**

**Members of the public are encouraged to provide comment or testimony through the following:**

- Joining in person or by phone, tablet, or PC. For details, click on the event at [www.ci.lowell.or.us](http://www.ci.lowell.or.us).
  - In writing, by using the drop box at Lowell City Hall, 107 East Third Street, Lowell, OR 97452.
  - By email to: [admin@ci.lowell.or.us](mailto:admin@ci.lowell.or.us).
- 

### **Work Session Agenda**

#### Call to Order/Roll Call

Councilors: Mayor Bennett \_\_\_ Harris \_\_\_ Stratis \_\_\_ Weathers \_\_\_ Murray \_\_\_

#### Approval of Agenda

#### Work Session Agenda

1. Discussion of City Council priorities for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.
  - a. Presentation by City Administrator Jeremy Caudle
  - b. Discussion and direction from City Council

#### Other Business

#### Adjourn the Work Session

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or other accommodations for persons with disabilities must be made at least 48 hours before the meeting to City Clerk Sam Dragt at 541-937-2157.

# Agenda Item Sheet

City of Lowell City Council



Type of item:	Discussion
---------------	------------

**Item title/recommended action:**

Discussion of City Council priorities for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.  
A. Presentation by City Administrator Jeremy Caudle  
B. Discussion and direction from City Council

**Justification or background:**

The recommended process for the 8/26/23 work session is different compared to the priority-setting meeting that City Council held earlier this year. The reason is that City Council already has a resolution that lists City Council's must have, should have, and could have goals. That resolution is appended to the memo following this agenda sheet. Instead, this work session is expected to be more conversational in nature.

The City Administrator's memo that accompanies the work session is intended to inspire discussion on the city's projects, policies, and operational needs. The City Administrator arrived at the recommendations in the memo based on several factors. The first factor is Resolution 797, which lists City Council's current must have, should have, and could have goals. The second factor is based on an assessment of current needs. This includes projects necessary to comply with legal mandates. The third factor is an evaluation of the city's current workflow and staffing and budget constraints.

The recommended process for the 8/26/23 work session is as follows:

(1) Review recommended projects. Questions to answer: Does the City Council wish to add additional projects, reprioritize the projects listed, or delete any of the projects listed?

# Agenda Item Sheet

City of Lowell City Council



Type of item:	Discussion
---------------	------------

(2) Review policy issues. Questions to answer: Does the list of policy issues accurately reflect the key issues that the city is facing? How does the City Council want to schedule debating and deciding on these issues? It's important to event out the workload to avoid marathon meetings. For issues affecting the community, the City Council may need to think about the city's engagement and communication strategy with citizens and other stakeholders. We may not be able to answer all of these questions at the 8/26/23 work session. The point is to ensure City Council is aware of issues that require further discussion and direction.

(3) Review operational issues. Questions to answer: Does the list of operational issues reflect the key issues affecting staffing, budgets, reporting, and oversight of city operations? Again, a series of discussions over the next few weeks to months may be required to answer these questions. Answers to some of these questions may also have to wait until we work through the budget process to decide what we can and can't fund.

**Budget impact:**

N/A

**Department or Council sponsor:**

Administration

**Attachments:**

8/22/23 memo to City Council

Meeting date:	08/26/2023
---------------	------------



City Administrator's Office  
P.O. Box 490 Lowell, OR 97452  
Phone: 541-937-2157  
Email: jcaudle@ci.lowell.or.us

**To:** Mayor Bennett and City Council  
**From:** Jeremy Caudle, City Administrator  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 22, 2023  
**Re:** Recommended priorities for 2023-2024

# MEMO

---

## Table of contents

Introduction.....	2
Overview for August 26, 2023 planning session.....	2
What projects should we start/complete in 23-24? .....	3
Select a new auditor.....	3
RFP for rate study .....	3
City Hall dumpster.....	4
Cybersecurity insurance .....	4
E-storage program.....	4
Solid waste assistance program .....	5
Sale surplus properties.....	6
Procure PLC/SCADA system.....	7
Update city ordinances .....	7
MuniCode codification .....	8
E-permitting program.....	8
Complete library donor recognition.....	9
Approve wastewater treatment master plan.....	9
Special event policy.....	9
Parks grants application .....	10
Sunridge park and trail maintenance .....	10
Paul Fisher park shade tree program .....	11
Wastewater SDC update.....	11
Personnel policy manual update .....	12
Caboose repairs .....	12
What policy issues should we resolve in 23-24?.....	12
E. 1 <sup>st</sup> St. repairs .....	12
City Hall open hours.....	13
Payment preservation plan.....	14
Law enforcement services.....	14
Fees for city services.....	15
Urban renewal district.....	16

City utility franchise fees.....	16
Code enforcement issues .....	17
What operational issues to consider in 23-24? .....	18
Expanding Blackberry Jam Festival.....	18
Parttime finance director.....	18
Financial reporting.....	18
Staff training .....	19
Library programming and other services .....	20
Conclusion.....	20
Appendix: Resolution 797.....	21

## 1. Introduction

This is to provide my recommended priorities for 2023-2024 for your consideration at the August 26, 2023 work session.

First, I discuss my recommended process for the August 26, 2023 planning session. This includes a review of City Council’s priorities from earlier this year.

Then, I present my recommendations in three sections. In the first section, I describe projects that we have planned, that are in progress, or that I’m recommending. I understand a *project* to be an undertaking with a start and an end, resulting in a new product, service, or process.

In the second section, I explain policy issues that require further discussion and direction from City Council. These policy issues may result in new projects or operational improvements once City Council makes a policy decision. The policy decision can be a vote to authorize or allocate resources to the project or operational decision. The point is that further discussion among City Council is necessary on the policy issue under consideration.

In the third section, I list operational improvements or issues that require additional discussion or resources. Operational improvements include training, staffing, reporting, and similar tasks that are intended to improve governance.

To be sure, there is overlap among these three areas. I believe it’s useful, however, to categorize these three topics separately.

## 2. Overview for the August 26, 2023 planning session

City Council’s 2023 priorities resolution is included for reference in the appendix. During the January 21, 2023, City Council identified as many priorities as possible until you ran out of ideas. We then ranked these priorities.

My recommended process for the August 26 session is more focused. Below, I've identified what I believe are the most important issues facing the city over 2023-2024. The discussion this Saturday can then focus on your agreement or disagreement with what I've described below.

You may wish to add to the list, subtract from the list, or reorder items. Keep in mind that each addition results in further dilution of staff time to manage what is an already full agenda.

I've listed the projects in order of their targeted completion date. Many of these projects will span several months, and we can work on them in parallel with other projects. In some cases, the targeted completion date is the latest date for us to initiate the project and not necessarily complete it.

### **3. What projects should we complete or start in 2023-2024?**

Project #1: Select a new external auditor.

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 9/19/23

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The selection committee will review proposals and conduct reference checks during the week of August 21.
- Staff foresee City Council approval of a new auditor not later than the September 19 meeting. Approval by this date is necessary to ensure we can complete the audit process by the December 31 deadline.

Project #2: Issue a request for proposals for a water/wastewater rate study consultant.

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 11/7/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- In my 2023-2024 budget message, I recommended completing a rate study to resolve our long-term rate issues. This would assist the city in making and communicating difficult rate decisions to the public. The Budget Committee and City Council agreed with this approach.
- By early November, at the latest, I recommend that we issue a RFP for rate study consultant services.
- With this timeframe, I estimate that the consultant would complete the rate study by early July, at the earliest.

- This may still give us time to have preliminary recommendations for inclusion in the 2024-2025 budget.

### Project #3: Place a dumpster at City Hall

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/1/2023

#### NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Our franchise agreement with Sanipac provides free dumpster service at City Hall.
- Prior to placing a dumpster at City Hall, we need to install a fence with privacy slats. The minimum building appearance standards requires businesses and institutions to screen dumpsters from view.
- We will need to contact a fence company to install the new fence.

### Project #4: Complete cybersecurity insurance updates

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/1/2023

#### NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- CIS offers cybersecurity coverage. This coverage would pay for the city's expenses to restore IT services in case of a cybersecurity attack. This includes the costs to hire computer forensic experts to restore the city's files.
- The city's coverage is currently at the lowest level. To increase coverage, we would need to complete an application for approval by CIS. The application would require the city to implement policies and process. Examples include: a cybersecurity policy; a personal identifiable information policy; offsite, geo-diverse backup of data; required training for employees; semi-annual phishing testing; and remote penetration testing.
- Implementing these new processes and policies will require staff time, as well as additional expenditures to our IT consultants with LCOG.
- In my view, the higher coverage level is necessary to ensure our continuity of operations in case of a cybersecurity attack. This should be a priority due to the increasing risk to governments of such attacks.

### Project #5: Start electronic storage program

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/1/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- This project is necessary for several reasons.
  - First, we intend to demolish the old City Hall, which houses our archives. In the interim, we will store our archives in a storage facility. To ensure the security and accessibility of these archives, as well as to ensure their preservation, however, we will eventually need to digitize these archives.
  - Second, storage space at the new City Hall is limited. We need to store certain records—such as records pertaining to accounts payable, utilities accounts, and contracts—for several years, according to the Secretary of State’s records retention schedule. We will eventually run out of room to store these records. The electronic storage program will solve our storage space problem.
  - Third, our current practice of maintaining paper records is inefficient. It is difficult for us to track contracts and franchise agreements, including when these agreements expire and need to be renewed. It is difficult to research past years’ accounts payable and utilities records, as this requires manual searches. An electronic storage program would allow us to automate many tracking tasks, as well as make it easier to search for documents using keywords, expiration dates, and so on.
- Earlier this year, I completed a demo with the Oregon Secretary of State’s vendor for electronic storage. I also included the subscriptions costs in the current year’s budget. To start, we will need to complete and application, create user accounts, train staff on the program, and implement new processes regarding document workflows in the office.
- Once the program is up and running, my intention is to use existing staff to record previous years’ records a little at a time. We will start with the most current years’ records and work our way backwards. It’s to be hope that in 2 to 3 years’ time, we can input all of the city’s minutes and other permanent records into electronic storage.

### Project #6: Approve solid waste assistance program

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/5/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- During the Sanipac franchise renewal process, City Council stated that the city should have a solid waste assistance program. The purpose of the program is to offset the increase in Sanipac’s fee schedule.
- The details of this program are not yet specified.

- Additional discussions with Sanipac are required to detail how the program could work. The process would require: monthly communication between Sanipac and the city to verify and document customer and account status; additional check processing responsibilities each month; creating new forms for citizens to sign up for the program; deciding how much of a benefit to give to eligible households; deciding how much of the franchise fee should be allocated to the program; and so on.
- Staff do not recommend writing checks to citizens to provide them assistance. Instead, staff recommend a solution that involves Sanipac crediting customers' accounts for the assistance. Alternatively, the city could write checks directly to Sanipac.
- The 12/5/23 target date is staff's goal to present a draft program to City Council.

Project #7: Start the process for sale of surplus city properties

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/5/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The budget message state's that the General Fund's projected ending balance depends on the city's ability to sell its two surplus properties. If we can't sell these properties by the end of the fiscal year, then we may need to make cuts during the fiscal year to meet the targeted ending fund balance.
- The first step to start this project is to complete phase 1 environmental assessments on both properties. This requires obtaining multiple quotes, as it's likely this will cost more than \$5,000.
- Simultaneously, we need to complete a hazardous materials survey of the old City Hall. If the survey detects asbestos, then we have two options. The first is to remove the asbestos prior to demolishing the building. The second is not to do the asbestos removal. In this case, we would sell the property as-is. The new owner would be responsible for removing the building, unless, for some reason, they wanted to keep the building.
- Once we complete the environmental tests, we should issue a request for proposals from qualified commercial real estate professionals. Since these are commercial properties, I believe it's in the city's interest to hire a professional to assist the city in marketing and selling these properties. The target deadline above is the goal to have a City Council's authorization to start advertising the RFP for commercial real estate services. Environmental testing should be completed before then.
- Once we sell the properties, we should use those funds to pay off the 70 N. Pioneer St. construction loan.
- For the Rolling Rock Park property, we will need to relocate the forestry equipment. Staff believe they can relocate this equipment by hooking it up to city trucks and moving it to the southern part of the park.

Project #8: Start procurement of PLC/SCADA system

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/1/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The city has secured \$300,000+ in funding from the State of Oregon. At the August 15, 2023 meeting, Rep. Charlie Conrad stated that it could take several weeks to a month or longer before the city receives that grant funding.
- During the week of August 20, staff plan on meeting with our new integrator of record—TAG. At this meeting, we will start developing the scope of the project.
- Once we receive the grant funding, we will start the procurement process. This will involve a meeting before City Council for you to review the proposed PLC/SCADA package.

Project #9: Review existing city ordinances for compliance with state law

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/19/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- We need to update several city ordinances related to the following issues: camping on city property, system development charges for accessory dwelling units, long-term occupancy in recreational vehicles, and updates to the city's building ordinances. Explanation:
  - Camping on city property. State law and federal appeals court decisions have limited local governments' ability to prohibit camping on public property. We must amend our code to align with the new state law.
  - System development charges for accessory dwelling units. Our new development code allows ADUs. Title Four of the Lowell Revised Code, however, doesn't have a formula for calculating equivalent dwelling units for ADUs. Without this formula, we can't calculate SDSs for ADUs.
  - Long-term occupancy in RVs. Recent changes in state law allow long-term occupancy in RVs under certain circumstances. Our municipal code prohibits long-term occupancy. We must change our municipal code so that it aligns with state law.
  - Updates to building ordinances. NW Code Professionals has recommended updates to align with changes in Oregon Building Codes Division's rules. We need to make these changes before we start the e-permitting program. The reason is that our rules and processes will affect the workflow process that we design in e-permitting.

Project #10: Complete MuniCode codification and issue a new supplement for the municipal code

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/31/2023

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Over the past 2 years, City Council has passed several new ordinances, which have amended the municipal code. The largest amendment was to replace the development code.
- We now need to codify these new ordinances into the Lowell Revised Code. MuniCode provides our codification services. This will result in MuniCode codifying these new ordinances in the online version of the Lowell Revised Code, as well as them issuing a supplement (hard copy) to the code.
- In addition, staff have noticed several typographical and spelling errors in MuniCode's version of our municipal code. We need to correct these errors.
- To start the process, we need to send all the new ordinances to MuniCode. They will provide a quote to issue the new supplement. Since the quote will be over \$5,000, City Council approval will be required.

Project #11: Start e-permitting program

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 1/1/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- State law now requires all local governments to conduct building inspections services entirely online. All local government must have an e-permitting system in place by 1/1/2025. The city does not have such a system.
- Oregon's Building Codes Division has an e-permitting system that local governments can use free of cost. Earlier this year, I contacted the Building Codes Division to inform them that the city would like to be a part of their program.
- The BCD staff informed me that they would place us in their queue, with the goal of starting our entrance into the program early in 2024.
- This will require the city to update and implement numerous policies and ordinances regarding building codes and inspections. Northwest Code Professionals can assist us with this.
- Staff will then spend several months designing the workflow in the e-permitting system with BCD staff. This process will likely take all next year to complete, and it will require a substantial investment in staff time.

Project #12: Complete library donor recognition

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 1/1/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The form that donors turned in for the library's capital campaigns promised bricks with donor's names engraved on them. The form also promised other forms of recognition, such as a donor wall. We should order the bricks by the end of the year and develop a plan on where and how to install them. The same is true of the donor wall.

Project #13: City Council approval of wastewater treatment plan update

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 2/6/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Civil West Engineering is still working on the wastewater treatment plan update. When they've completed a draft of the plan, I anticipate that they'll meet with City Council over several work sessions to complete a final draft.
- Afterwards, approval from the state, which will involve additional edits, will be required.
- Once the wastewater treatment plan is completed, I recommend updated the wastewater treatment SDCs. I anticipate this process to be similar to the one that City Council completed for the water and parks SDCs.

Project #14: Complete special event policy

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 2/6/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Earlier this summer, the city received a last-minute special event request for a festival. This situation reinforced the need to have policies and expectations in place for special events. These policies and expectations will limit the city's exposure to risk, as well as reduce the stress that all parties experience when trying to organize an event at the last minutes.
- CIS has a model special event policy. We will need to edit the policy to tailor it to our needs in Lowell.
- This isn't as high a priority as other projects, which is why it has a target date for next year.

Project #15: Apply for small project grants for city parks

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 3/1/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Each year that funding is available, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department administers its Local Government Grant Program. The city has previously applied for funding for the Rolling Rock Park phase 1 project through a combination of OPRD grants. The City Council ultimately decided to withdraw our last application with the goal to revise the scope of renovations.
- For next year's grant cycle, I recommend submitting a small project grant application for Rolling Rock Park and Paul Fisher Park. The application would be for restroom upgrades, as well as security cameras. The restroom upgrades would include installation of vandalism resistant fixtures. The security cameras would be to deter vandalism, as well as to assist in identifying individuals who vandalize the park. This fall, we will need to obtain quotes to complete these improvements so we can develop a project budget.
- The grant application opens in spring. Prior to that, we should have the project budget, as well as votes of approval from the Parks Committee and City Council. We would then know in August 2024 if our grant application is successful.
- Until we install vandalism resistant fixtures, I do not recommend opening the restrooms or putting portable toilets at the parks. My concern is that vandalism will only continue without the measures that I described here.

Project #16: Sunridge subdivision park and rail trail maintenance

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 4/1/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- In early 2022, the Oregon Department of Forestry secured a grant for a fuel reduction project on city property. The property comprises the approximately 7 acres of vacant land south of the Sunridge Subdivision. The grant agreement with ODF requires the city to maintain the property for 10 years. The blackberries and weeds, however, have grown back.
- In addition, the city used to have funds dedicated to maintaining the property. Those funds comprised a donation from the previous owners of the property. The city has now exhausted those funds.
- The city will now need to use its own funds—or obtain grants—to maintain the property. The property has significant maintenance needs that exceed the capabilities of city staff. At a minimum, we will need to hire a professional land clearing company to

remove the brush from the hillside property. Access to the property is also difficult, making this project even more costly and challenging.

- Lastly, the residences in the subdivision have voiced their concern over the property. The concern is that the vegetation on the property poses a fire risk.
- We need to develop an annual maintenance plan for the property. This plan must include an allocation of budget resources to pay for the professional maintenance.
- The completion date above is the date to present City Council with a quote from a professional land clearing service. We need to complete the fuels reduction prior to next year's fire season.

#### Project #17: Complete Paul Fisher Park shade tree program

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 4/1/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- In early 2022, the City Council implemented a shade tree program, based on recommendations from the Parks Committee. Staff have ordered all the trees for the program using donations.
- The only remaining detail has to do with the memorial plaques that donors can place in the park. The program guidelines state that the Parks Committee will “develop design guidelines [for the memorial plaques] at a later meeting and will review and approve the plaques prior to their installation.”
- The targeted completion date is the goal for Parks Committee to decide on how it wants to implement the memorial plaque aspect of the program.

#### Project #18: Complete wastewater treatment SDC update

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 6/18/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Staff recommend implementing new wastewater treatment SDCs before the new fiscal year. If the City Council approves a new wastewater treatment master plan early in 2024, this would give the City Council approximately 4 to 5 months to implement new SDCs based off of the master plan recommendations.

Project #19: Complete personnel policy manual update

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 6/18/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The personnel policy manual is nearly 20 years old. The state's employment laws have changed significantly since then. In addition, many of the city's personnel practices have changed, which makes the manual obsolete.
- To ensure compliance with the law, as well as effective administration of personnel issues, the city needs a new personnel manual.
- CIS has a model manual. We should base our manual off CIS's model and tailor it to our needs. It is also typical to consult with an employment law attorney for a project like this. When we've completed a draft policy, we should have an employment law attorney review it.
- The target date is the second City Council meeting for June of next year.

Project #20: Complete caboose repairs

TARGETED COMPLETION DATE: 12/31/2024

NOTES/STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- The Lowell/Fall Creek Educational Foundation recently awarded the city \$5,000 to repair the caboose's siding.
- The targeted completion date is the deadline in our MOU with the foundation. It is possible that we'll complete this project before then.

**4. What policy issues does the City Council need to resolve for 2023-2024?**

Policy issue #1: E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street repairs

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 10/3/2023

DISCUSSION:

- The disrepair of E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street continues to result in complaints from citizens who are located on or who use that street.
- One option to respond to these complaints, as the city works through the cost recovery process, is to implement a short-term fix to the street. This fix would be to pave asphalt over the road without fixing the underlying infrastructure problems. This option would eliminate the dust problems and make it easier for citizens to drive on the

road. However, this would result in an estimated \$50,000 in construction expenses. It is unlikely the city could recoup those expenses. In addition, the city would need eventually need to completely dig up the road and rebuild it, and the underlying infrastructure. This would result in the destruction of this short-term fix.

- The cost recovery process, however, could take several months or longer. During this time, staff will spend several thousands of dollars periodically to place gravel on the road.
- If the costs of continuing to place gravel on the road exceed the costs to repave the road—even if repaving is a short-term fix—then the council may decide that repaving the road is a more cost-effective option.

### Policy issue #2: City Hall open hours

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 11/7/2023

#### DISCUSSION:

- The City Clerk and I have discussed timelines for completing certain tasks. These tasks include writing meeting minutes, filing meeting paperwork, posting meeting videos the city's YouTube page and website, organizing contracts and other official documents, and so on.
- These tasks require several hours of concentration to complete. Due to frequent interruptions in the office, it is difficult sometimes to find the time needed to complete these tasks. The result is that it is difficult to meet the preferred timelines for completing these tasks, which in turn results in a backlog of work. My preferred timeline for completing meeting minutes, for instance, is the week before the City Council's second monthly meeting. This gives enough time to review the minutes for accuracy and ensure their inclusion in the packet for the second monthly meeting. Under this timeline, the City Council would approve the previous month's meeting at each second monthly meeting.
- Completing the City Council's minutes, in a month without special meetings, requires around 3 hours per week. Added to that, however, are meeting minutes and documents for the city's other committee and commissions. It is important to have time to focus on completing the meeting minutes. For instance, where there's a phone call or rush of citizens at the counter, it can take 15 to 30 minutes to return to watching the meeting video and typing the minutes. Upon returning to this task, it takes a few minutes to recall what was happening in the video before the interruption.
- The City Clerk and I discussed 4 options to ensure the time and space needed to focus on these tasks.
  - Option 1. Close City Hall early on Thursday. The City Clerk then comes to work on Friday when the office is closed and there are no interruptions. The City Clerk uses this time to get caught up.

- Option 2. Open City Hall 1 hour late during the week—say, at 9:00 am. The City Clerk comes to work at 7:30 am or 8:00 am, using this time to get caught up before opening City Hall.
- Option 3. The City Clerk attends each meeting virtually, taking minutes as the meeting transpires. This eliminates the need for the City Clerk to watch the meeting recordings while at City Hall. The City Clerk then leaves early on Thursday to avoid having to be paid overtime. City Hall would also close early.
- Option 4. The City Clerk and I agreed to start with this option and see how it goes, with a check-in meeting to occur in a month's time. Under this option, the City Clerk would come to work at 8:00 am, instead of the usually 7:30 am. She would also open City Hall at this time, as usual. During this time, office traffic and phone calls are at a minimum. The City Clerk believes that she can complete opening office procedures and then turn to completing meeting minutes before mid-morning. By coming in 30 minutes late each day, the City Clerk will have saved 2 hours that she can use to come in on Friday, if necessary.
- At this point, a decision from City Council on altering City Hall open hours is not necessary, as the City Clerk and I are going to start with Option 4. However, if Option 4 isn't working, staff may bring this item to you at a future meeting for discussion.

Policy issue #3: Approve pavement preservation plan

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 10/1/2023

DISCUSSION:

- Civil West Engineering completed a pavement preservation plan for the city in 2019.
- It does not appear that City Council approved this plan.
- I recommend placing this on a future City Council meeting agenda for discussion and approval. This plan is necessary for future grant efforts, such as the Oregon Department of Transportation's Small City Allotment program.
- At the meeting, City Council can provide direction to staff on which projects to prioritize for future grant writing efforts.

Policy issue #4: Law enforcement services and levy

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 10/17/2023

DISCUSSION:

- In early 2022, the City Council held work sessions with the Oakridge Police Department and Lane County Sheriff's Office on expanding police services in the city. The

city also conducted a community survey on citizens' preferences regarding police services and how to fund these services.

- In May 2022, the City Council ultimately decided to postpone action on this item, citing the lack of time to prepare for a November 2022 ballot measure. The City Council stated its preference to return to this item at a later meeting.
- The only way to resolve the questions regarding the scope and funding for law enforcement services is through a vote of the people. Until that happens, this topic will continue to cause debate within the community.
- I recommend for the City Council to hold multiple town hall meetings with the Oa-ridge Police Department and Sheriff's Office through late 2023 and early 2024. The purpose of the town hall meetings will be to educate the public on the scope of law enforcement services under a new contract, as well as the costs involved. I recommend that City Council approve a resolution in spring 2024 to refer a ballot measure to the voters in November 2024 elections. The ballot measure will be to approve a special levy to pay for an expanded law enforcement services contract.
- If the voters fail to approve the ballot measure, then City Council will need to decide the future of law enforcement services in the community.
- In my 2023-2024 budget message, I discussed the structural budget pressures that the city is facing. If we can't fund police services through a special levy, then we should consider a public safety fee. If a public safety fee isn't feasible, then we should consider discontinuing the police services contract to achieve structural balance in the city budget.

Policy issue #5: Decide on fees for capital improvements and other city services or cuts to city services

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 5/21/2023

DISCUSSION:

- As mentioned under policy issue #4, my recommended 2023-2024 budget message explains the General Fund's structural deficit. This deficit is due to several reasons, including increased debt services requirements over the past 4 to 5 years, expenditures increasing greater than revenues, and revenue stagnation.
- I also mentioned in the budget message that this year's budget provides short-term fixes. We must start thinking now about increasing revenues or cutting services. Otherwise, next year's budget process will be much more difficult than the one we just completed.
- One option is for City Council to implement new fees to pay for services. One such fee could be a maintenance fee. This fee would allow the city to save and pay for capital improvements and other maintenance needs. These needs include a new roof for City Hall, which we will need in a few years' time; ongoing maintenance to the City Hall

parking lot, which will continue to deteriorate, unless it is replaced entirely; significant ongoing maintenance for the city's property south of the Sunridge Subdivision; ongoing maintenance and repairs to the city's parks; and so on.

- Alternatively, if implementing new fees is not feasible, the City Council must decide which services it wants to cut from the budget.
- I need direction from City Council on how to structure the conversation around these issues. My intention is to start bringing these topics up now. That way, we can reduce contention and long, stressful meetings during the 2024-2025 budget cycle.

Policy issue #6: Should the city start the process to create an urban renewal district?

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 5/21/2023

DISCUSSION:

- The city attempted to create an urban renewal district in the early 2000s. That effort, however, fell short by a few dozen votes.
- The 2019 downtown master plan recommends implementing an urban renewal district as one way to fund the projects listed in the plan.
- To start, we would need to hire a consultant to study this issue. The study would provide an estimate of the revenues that the district would generate.
- Afterwards, we would hold an election for the citizens and property owners in the proposed district to vote on the district.
- I have the targeted decision date for some time in spring, as this should coincide with the budget process. That's because we would need to budget for consulting fees for the study.

Policy issue #7: Should the city reimplement the franchise fees on city utilities?

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: 5/21/2023

DISCUSSION:

- The City Council removed the franchise fees on the city's sewer and water utilities for the 2023-2024 budget. This resulted in a decrease of around \$40,000 in General Funds.
- The City Council must provide direction on if it wishes to reimplement these fees for next year's budget. If not, we must decide what offsetting cuts to make.
- I have the targeted decision date in spring of next year, as this would coincide with the budget process. Up to that point, we should have a series of discussions on how

to bring the General Fund into structural balance. That discussion must include expectations on the appropriate level of ending fund balances for the General Fund, as well as the city's other major funds.

Policy issue #8: What are the City Council's and community's expectations on enforcing the nuisance code, minimum building appearance code,

TARGETED DATE OF FIRST CITY COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION: ONGOING ISSUE

DISCUSSION:

- The topic of enforcing the city's ordinances regarding nuisances and building appearance is a source of concern for many citizens. These citizens have urged the city to take a more proactive approach to enforcing ordinances. This approach would include a more aggressive stance towards ensuring property owners' compliance with the city's regulations. This includes the city abating nuisances—at its own time and expense—where property owners fail to act in response to violation notices and citations.
- I previously reported to City Council on the time-consuming process of resolving violations, especially if the property owner fails to comply. The City of Oakridge can provide some assistance in terms of issuing citations to violators. This assistance, however, does not result in an immediate resolution of the issue. It usually takes several days to more than a week to issue a citation. Since municipal court takes place quarterly, it could be up to 90 days before a violator has a court date. If the violator fails to come to court, or fails to pay a fine, the city's recourse is limited to abating the nuisance itself.
- The question for City Council is how proactive do you want the city to be in enforcing code violations? Should we continue with our current process, which is mostly complaint driven? Should staff set aside days to drive around town to identify violations? If so, how often should this occur? What types of violations should we prioritize for enforcement?
- While deciding these issues, we must keep in mind that the city does not have a dedicated code enforcement officer. Enforcement falls on the City Administrator. Each task that gets added to my list means that I must necessarily remove something else from the list. There just aren't enough hours in the day to do everything that needs to be done, especially with our small staff and limited budget.

## 5. What operational issues do we need to consider for 2023-2024?

### Operational issue #1: Do we expand Blackberry Jam Festival next year?

#### DISCUSSION:

- The Blackberry Jam Festival Committee is considering expanding next year's festival due to the success of this year. The expansion includes adding 1 day—Friday—to the festival's timeline. Thursday would then be the day for festival set-up.
- The extra day will result in increased festival expenses, as well as increased staffing needs.
- I propose that we hold off on deciding to expand the festival until early 2024. Factors on deciding this issue include the fund balance in the Blackberry Jam Festival fund, the extent to which the festival's revenues covered (or didn't cover) expenses this year, the steps the committee will take next year to increase revenues, and volunteer commitments for next year.
- We also need to consider the demand on city staff time. The festival requires a significant expenditure of time from the City Clerk, Public Works staff, and City Administrator. The potential festival expansion requires further discussion and agreement among city staff and festival volunteers prior to making a decision.

### Operational issue #2: Can we afford to hire a parttime finance director?

#### DISCUSSION:

- In my budget message, I explained the need to transition the contract accountant role into a parttime finance director. We have increased the contract accountant's hours each year over the past two year to where she now works 16 hours per week.
- This is a question to answer during the 2024-2025 budget cycle. For now, I am presenting this item for City Council's awareness as we juggle multiple budget demands.

### Operational issue #3: How can we improve financial reporting for the community and City Council?

#### DISCUSSION:

- The City Council has commented on the topic of receiving timely and easy to understand financial reports. I recommend providing these reports at least quarterly. The reports would provide a snapshot in a format that's simpler to read than the monthly financial statement

- The first quarter for the current fiscal year, then, ends in September. The contract accountant typically completes the financial report for a specific month 30 days after month-end. This results in the following schedule for quarterly financial reports:

#	Quarter begins	Quarter ends	Report available after
Q1	7/1/2023	9/30/2023	11/1/2023
Q2	10/1/2023	12/31/2023	2/1/2024
Q3	12/31/2023	3/31/2024	5/1/2024
Q4	3/31/2024	6/30/2024	8/1/2024

Operational issue #4: What staff training do we need to ensure continuity of operation?

DISCUSSION:

- Since we are a small city, cross-training among staff is necessary to ensure continuity of operations in case of absences or vacancies in positions.
- My staff training priority is in the Public Works Department. Our two operators have met, or will soon meet, the criteria for promotion to Operator II. (See my latest budget message for detail.) The Public Works Director and I will present a job description for the Operator II position for City Council approval. Afterwards, I will approve promotions to this position when staff meet the criteria. Then, my expectation is for the Public Works Director to implement a training program for these staff so that they are cross trained in all areas of public works.
- A second goal is for the Public Works Director to complete a series of trainings in public administration leadership, likely sometime in 2024. This will provide the Public Works Director with the training to continue developing as a leader, take on greater responsibilities, and manage the organization in case of the City Administrator's absence or vacancy.
- Lastly, I need to continue developing my knowledge in the areas of court administration, use of our accounting system, and other office procedures. This will ensure I can keep the office running with the minimum of disruptions when the City Clerk is absent due to vacations or other reasons.

## Operational issue #5: How can we increase the library's programming and other services?

### DISCUSSION:

- Now that the library has been operational for several months, we should evaluate how best to serve the library through programming and similar services. This includes summer reading programs, classes, joining a larger system for purposes of interlibrary loans, and so on.
- This also includes evaluating our volunteer recruitment and training efforts, as well as grant writing efforts to secure funding for new programs.
- In 2 to 3 years' time, we may want to create a strategic plan for the library to address these issues.

### **6. Conclusion**

With this work session, my hope is to avoid a situation where there's a major shift in policy or expectations halfway through the year. This work session is the opportunity to put everything on the table.

We have a busy year ahead of us. My goal for the work session is for there to be clarity and agreement on our workload so that we can remain focused.

To be sure, other issues will come up during the year, and we may need to shift our attention or reprioritize. We still need to manage the day-to-day realities of the community and organization. For example, I anticipate that land use applications will require significant attention over the next few months. I'll also need to start working on the 2024 elections early next year. If we do face a major shift, however, then City Council should provide direction on which priorities to reorder or eliminate in order to accommodate the new priorities.

**CITY OF LOWELL, OREGON**

**RESOLUTION 797**

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES  
FOR 2023.**

---

**The City Council finds as follows:**

1. On January 21, 2023, the City Council held a work session to identify and rank projects of importance to the city.
2. The City Council identified and rank-ordered a total of 51 projects.
3. The City Council categorizes the projects into three priorities: "must have," "should have," and "could have."
4. The highest priority projects, categorized as "must have," are considered the most critical to the City's success and well-being.
5. The second highest priority projects, categorized as "should have," are considered important but less critical than the "must have" projects.
6. The third highest priority projects, categorized as "could have," are considered desirable but are not essential to the City's success and well-being.
7. Projects not identified as "must have," "should have," or "could have" are categorized as "wish" or "won't have at this time."
8. The City Council's ranking of these projects will serve as a guide for future budgeting and resource allocation decisions.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Lowell, Oregon as follows:**

**Section 1.** The City Council's "must have" goals, in order of highest to lowest priority, are as follows:

1. Add 1 full-time Public Works employee to respond to growing workloads.
2. Replace the existing supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) with new hardware and software.
3. Update the personnel policy and create job descriptions.
4. Complete the sale of surplus city properties and use the proceeds to improve the city's financial condition.

**Section 2.** The City Council's "should have" goals, in order of highest to lowest priority, are as follows:

1. Plant shade trees in Rolling Rock Park.
2. Complete an analysis of the city's buildable land, along with an assessment of future housing needs.
3. Start an intern program to supplement city staffing and to assist in training the next generation of public servants.
4. Turn the contract accountant role into a part-time or full-time Finance Director position.
5. Construct a basketball court at Rolling Rock Park.
6. Create a 5-year capital improvements plan to synthesize the recommendations from all the city's master plans, as well as other operational needs.
7. Determine the cost-effectiveness of the current law enforcement service agreement with Oakridge Police Department and make a decision on whether to keep or cancel the agreement.
8. Take steps needed to form an urban improvements district, starting with a feasibility study.
9. Conduct public outreach and education on code enforcement, including limitations on what city staff can do with existing resources.
10. Develop a new comprehensive plan.
11. Give the public the opportunity to weigh in on expanded law enforcement services through outreach and a referred measure seeking funding.
12. Complete an emergency management plan in collaboration with local agencies and community groups.

**Section 3.** The City Council's "could have" goals, in order of highest to lowest priority, are as follows:

1. Complete a risk matrix for city operations to assist City Council with decision-making.
2. Complete a web accessibility audit.
3. Complete the process to demolish the old City Hall and prepare the property for sale, including moving the old records out of the building.
4. Create a user-friendly financial dashboard to supplement the current monthly financial statement reports.
5. Implement an ordinance to allow and regulate food trucks within the city.
6. Install a well system in Paul Fisher Park for irrigation purposes.
7. Continue holding the Blackberry Jam Festival commensurate with the number of volunteers willing to serve and in line with recommendations from a risk assessment.
8. Install cameras and monitoring systems at city parks.
9. Repaint and rehabilitate the caboose at Rolling Rock Park.
10. Create a plan for greater speed control in the city, including speed display signs, traffic and speed control measures, and traffic enforcement.
11. Create a reference manual of city events for training purposes and for public knowledge.

12. Create a street light program, including options for expanding and maintaining street lights.
13. Determine benchmark comparisons for the city's financial position and set targets (for example, ending fund balances) using those benchmarks.
14. Expand high speed internet throughout the city and explore options for funding.
15. Hold additional work sessions to determine how to direct limited city resources to existing code enforcement issues.

**Section 4.** Projects categorized as “wish” or “won’t have at this time” are as follows:

- Build the new water reservoir, as recommended in the water master plan.
- Complete repairs to sewer collection system to reduce inflow and infiltration to reduce the risk of system overflows and non-compliance.
- Create a sidewalk connectivity plan.
- Create a street maintenance schedule.
- Create a walking routes map and put copies of the map in the library, etc. for use by the public.
- Develop a community garden in city parks.
- Develop a plan for the Sunridge Subdivision open space.
- Hold a successful opening ceremony for the library, including press coverage and attendance from local and state dignitaries.
- Hold an annual hazardous waste round-up event for citizens.
- Hold story walk events at city parks.
- Improve drainage on D Street.
- Obtain grants to construct a pedestrian-friendly route to the lake.
- Obtain grants to supplement the library's operating budget.
- Obtain necessary matching funds to secure our 2019 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, even if on a smaller scope than originally planned.
- Prepare a list of possible elections or referenda to be referred to the voters.
- Purchase a smart board and monitor for the multi-purpose room.
- Reactivate the Economic Development Committee.
- Reactivate the Library Committee and create a "Friends of the Library" non-profit organization.
- Rehabilitate and secure restrooms at city parks.
- Schedule adult education program in the multi-purpose room in collaboration with local agencies such as community colleges

**Section 5.** The City Council intends to review this update this list periodically, as well as to monitor progress towards achieving these goals.

**Section 6.** This Resolution is effective upon adoption and will remain in place until amended or repealed through further City Council resolutions.

**Adopted by the City Council of the City of Lowell this 7<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2023.**

AYES: 5

NOES: 0

APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Don Bennett, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeremy Caudle, City Recorder