

**CITY of LA GRANDE
COUNCIL RETREAT**

**Tuesday
January 25, 2022**

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 2022 ~ 2023 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 2, 2022, Regular Session of the City Council. While the Annual Retreat is open to the public to view electronically, 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 Comment portion of each Regular Session Agenda.

Per ORS 192.670(1), all Councilor Members and Staff will participate 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.

Sandra Patterson
City Recorder

Persons requiring special accommodations who wish to participate in this Work Session are encouraged to make arrangements prior to the meeting by calling 541-962-1309. Note the City Council WILL NOT be accepting public comments during this Work Session. The City of La Grande does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities.

City Council Retreat Summary and Goals and Priorities 2022

January 25, 2022

(Note: Items in **blue** are changes/updates from prior year’s topics. 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. Infrastructure/Capital Expenditure Related

a. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

- i. The City Council intends to conduct a Work Session to discuss the use of the City’s ARPA funding once in-person meetings with the public can resume. The City Manager intends to include full funding of the ARPA allocation in the FY 2022-23 Proposed Budget with the specific uses to be determined.

b. Street Infrastructure

- i. The PTSSMAC is currently working on formulating a recommendation to the City Council, date of a joint Work Session to be determined.

c. Building needs:

i. Police Department Building

- 1. The City is engaged with the Sheriff at the Staff level regarding a possible joint building. The City Council will be engaged as appropriate.

2. Staffing

a. Police and Fire Department

- i. The public safety sector has been particularly difficult to keep fully staffed in recent years, which has become even more difficult over the past two years. We have been unsuccessful in recruiting experienced police officers and certified paramedics. Other jurisdictions are experiencing similar issues and signing bonuses and other incentives are becoming more prevalent. Additionally, call

volumes and other workload considerations are making recruitment and retention more difficult. Staff would like to explore additional measures such as expanded recruitment incentives, potentially revisiting compensation mid-contract, and staffing levels in both Police and Fire.

b. 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. It is anticipated that the City Manager and Fire Chief could retire within the next two to three years. Neither position has a clear “second in command” or deputy position in place to allow for continuity. The City Manager believes adding an Assistant Fire Chief position is warranted in the coming fiscal year and is exploring options for City Manager succession.

3. Planning

a. Housing

- i. **Comprehensive Housing Production Strategy (HPS)**—following the adoption of the Housing Needs Analysis, the City adopted a HPS to comply with HB 2003.
 1. The HPS addressed 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 Council supported targeting incentives such as:
 - a. Reduce or waive fees for targeted projects (e.g. water/sewer connections, building permits, system development charges, other)
 - b. Tax abatement for new development (phase in property tax)
 - c. Modify the System Development Charges (SDC) fee to assess based on the scale of development (e.g. number of bedrooms vs. one set fee per dwelling unit).
 - d. Target Urban Renewal District investments to better support the renovation and creation of new housing units
 - e. Public-private partnerships where the City helps fund or participates in new infrastructure construction.

The Staff will be bringing forward items for Council consideration as appropriate based on resources.

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

1. Limited available lands for larger commercial/retail development.
 - i. No large lot commercial in URD and recent sales/development has depleted our available lands inventory.

- ii. In order to address this shortage, we need to pursue conducting a Commercial Land Needs Analysis and Comprehensive Plan Goal 9 Update to increase our inventory to allow for new development.
- iii. Currently there aren't any grant opportunities to fund such an update.
- iv. Based on our inability to add new Commercial property without an update, Staff is recommending the City Council support moving forward and fund this effort using City General Fund dollars given we cannot accommodate any significant new projects at this time.

This is also on the Economic Development Retreat topic list.

4. Homelessness/Max Square

- a. Staff has been working this issue, including holding a public forum with local business leaders. The recent legislative actions and court decisions limit local government's ability to enforce past ordinance provisions which were effective tools for addressing certain behaviors. Next steps include:
 - i. Adding security cameras in or near Max Square.
 - ii. A follow up meeting is scheduled with City Staff to continue to evaluate the situation including how we can better communicate with our local partners with the intent to form a local working group or ad hoc committee.
 - iii. Additional communication with the community at large, with an emphasis on downtown businesses.
 - iv. Updating City Ordinances relating to use of public spaces to conform to the new requirements.

5. Committees and Commissions

- a. Encouraging participation in Advisory Committees and Commissions.
- b. Increasing diversity and community participation on Commissions and Committees.

6. Service/Program Related

a. Recreation Center

Active committee discussions stopped in the winter of 2019 for the holidays and never resumed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission is currently drafting a parks master plan that will set department priorities for the next five years. An online survey and focus group discussions took place in 2021 with over 500 people participating. When asked about indoor recreation needs, the top two priorities were a multi-purpose active recreation space and safe indoor space for teens. Due to these results, it is likely that planning for a multi-use, multi-purpose facility will resume and be a priority for the Commission over the next few years after the Parks Master Plan is adopted in the Fall of 2022.

b. Greenway

The City was awarded a grant from Oregon State Parks to expand the end of the Greenway trail in a loop formation on the two City-owned lots to the East. This funding will enable the City to construct an additional 1600 feet of asphalt pathway in summer 2022.

7. Partnerships

a. Tourism Promotion

- i. The agreement with the Chamber runs through 2023 and no action is required.

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.

Staff is recommending the City renew the Agreement with LGMSD prior to expiration.

8. Wildland Urban Interface

Following last year's Retreat, the City Council conducted a Work Session with a presentation from County Emergency Management and the City of La Grande Public Safety regarding measures that are in place and activities that have occurred over the past few years. Staff evaluated and determined that evacuation signage would be ineffective and likely counterproductive in the event the need for large scale community evacuation. Public information about preparedness and emergency procedures was sent out in a direct mailing campaign and a number of postings on social media. More work still needs to be done in the area of defensible spaces with more education and assistance with possible funding for residents in the Wildland Urban Interface.

9. 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.

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 2020-2021 the City could forego an Under Levy in 2022-2023 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.

City/District Manager's Top Priorities
Fiscal Year 2021-2022
(Approved by City Council February 2021)
These will be updated for FY 2022-23

- **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**
 - Continue to take all necessary actions to comply with the State and Federal mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as identify and implement policies and programs to assist in the recovery efforts within the City's resources.
This one can be replaced with ARPA funding related priority, deleted, or included as part of Economic Development below.
- **Economic Development**
 - Continue to implement the Urban Renewal Plan and economic development strategy as approved by the City Council/Urban Renewal Agency.
- **Wildland Urban Interface**
 - In concert with Union County and other agencies, take actions to assure La Grande is prepared in the event of a wildfire or other natural disaster, such as the ones that devastated other communities in Oregon in 2020.
- **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.
This one should be updated based on current status of HPS.
- **FEMA Maps and Land Use Code Amendments**
 - Complete the public process and submittal to FEMA for updating the City's Floodplain Maps.
 - Complete the revisions and adoption of the City's Land Use Codes as necessary.
This one can probably be removed until FEMA acts.
- **Staffing**
 - Take necessary actions to address critical staffing issues including, but not limited to, hard to fill positions and succession planning for key positions.