CITY OF BEND

City Hall
710 NW Wall Street
Bend, OR 97703

MEETING MINUTES

Bend City Council Work Session

Location: Council Chambers, 710 NW Wall Street, City Hall, Bend, OR
Date: October 14, 2026
Time: 4:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m. City Council Work Session

1. **Called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Roll Call**: Mayor Melanie Kebler (online), Mayor Pro Tem Megan Perkins, Councilor Gina Franzosa, Councilor Ariel Méndez, Councilor Mike Riley, Councilor Megan Norris (arrived late at 5:10 p.m.), and Councilor Steve Platt

2. **Wildfire Resiliency: Defensible Space Code**

   Councilor Megan Norris was recused on this item and arrived late.

   Presentation by Senior Policy Analyst Sarah Hutson and Deputy Fire Marshal Melissa Steele.

   Hutson identified the related Council goal to build community wildfire resiliency and noted today's discussion seeks direction to shape future defensible space policy.

   Hutson provided baseline assumptions: all of Bend is high risk; home hardening, defensible space and culture change reduce risk; today's focus is on defensible space; and that staff is seeking policy direction first, and implementation details will come later.

   Steele defined defensible space and outlined the City's current defensible space efforts. Steele shared common questions, concerns, and perceptions heard from community members.

   Steele shared examples of what defensible space code could look like, and compared effort, cost and mitigation impact across examples. Steele noted code requirements should be equitable and enforceable.

   Hutson shared compliance recommendations, which included:
   - Ongoing support

- Phased effective dates
- Education before enforcement
- Use of data to prioritize resources
- Use self-inspection tools to expand reach
- Limit use of citations
- Prioritize proactive enforcement over complaint-driven enforcement
- Additional staffing and budget

Hutson shared an example phasing strategy, including short term (1-2 years), medium terms (2-5 years) and long term (5+ years) efforts.

Hutson asked Council for input on the following four questions, and provided related considerations for each:

- Question 1: Scope: How far should the City go in expanding requirements to reduce community wildfire risk?

Council expressed general support for a community-wide framework, and shared concerns over cost and timing, recognizing that broad community acceptance will take more time.

Mayor Kebler identified required existing backflow testing and the septic to sewer program as potentially analogous in implementation and community involvement.

- Question 2: Resourcing: What level of investment and organizational commitment is Council willing to consider in support of future defensible space efforts?

Mayor Pro Tem Perkins supported expanding community investment and advocating to the State legislature.

Councilor Riley suggested identifying 2-3 revenue options to focus on in the near term, such as the fire levy.

Councilor Méndez suggested first identifying what can be accomplished without additional funding.

Councilor Franzosa suggested reprioritizing current funds and potentially reallocating funding from other areas to this area.

Councilor Platt expressed concern over waiting for the 2028 fire levy and agreed with reprioritizing current City funds to focus on a pilot program in a high fire-risk

community by next summer. Mayor Pro Tem Perkins expressed concerns over cost to individuals to make improvements, and Councilor Franzosa expressed support for Councilor Platt's pilot program.

- Question 3: Community Engagement: What role should community engagement play in defensible space policy development?

Mayor Kebler was supportive of in-depth community engagement and community buy-in before making changes to the code, and expressed concerns over a fast timeline, noting that time is needed for community input and buy-in. Mayor Kebler suggested decoupling the proposed pilot program from the code change.

City Manager Eric King suggested modeling a pilot program on the current septic-to-sewer program in which a neighborhood self-identifies as interested in participating. Steele felt a small pilot program was feasible and suggested identifying vulnerable communities.

Councilor Platt expressed concern about equity in selecting a community for the pilot program.

Mayor Pro Tem Perkins suggested a citizen's assembly and work groups for community engagement on policy.

- Question 4: Approach to Standards: How closely should future policy align with wildfire science when recommendations may be difficult, costly, or unpopular to implement?

Council noted the importance of balance and input from the community on what they are willing to sacrifice for mitigation.

Councilor Franzosa suggested moving more quickly with requirements for new construction.

Council noted conflicts between defensible space and the tree code, as well as the community resistance to removing trees. Steele confirmed that there are no conflicts between the two codes in the first five feet.

City Manager Eric King provided a summary:

- Policy: Scope a citizen assembly about policy
- Pilot program: Identify a vulnerable target area and identify possible funding sources

Council supported working more quickly on requirements for new development and indicated that some community input would be needed, but not as much as would be needed for existing development.

Councilor Platt identified the need for funding for initial treatment as well as for ongoing maintenance. Mayor Kebler identified the need to consider staffing for these programs.

3. Fiscal Policy Update

Councilor Norris joined the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

Presentation by Chief Financial Officer Samantha Nelson and Budget & Financial Planning Manager Dan Quick. No slides were presented.

Nelson explained that the fiscal policy is regularly reviewed, and proposed updates include branding updates, formatting updates, and simplified language. Nelson identified the substantive changes proposed to the fiscal policy:

- Targeting the use of 20% of street preservation funding to be utilized for bike, pedestrian or traffic safety projects
- Current policy around Full-Time Employee (FTE) adoption

Nelson explained that any time the FTE schedule increases, it requires Council approval. Proposed changes would move the approval process to the City Manger (to help with timing) and require additional FTE be within the adopted personnel budget. Changes also included staff coming to Council with an in-depth quarterly financial analysis that compares adopted FTE and changes to date to provide Council an ongoing view of FTE changes.

Councilor Riley suggested identifying a specific target and removing qualifying language from the policy around bike, pedestrian and traffic safety project funding. Nelson was supportive of this recommended change and agreed to modify the language.

4. Juniper Ridge Land Sale Reserve Fund

Presentation by Real Estate, Facilities and Housing Director Matthew Stuart and Economic Development Officer Katy Brooks.

Stuart provided background and summary of the funding discussion that occurred at the September 16, 2026, Bend Urban Renewal Agency (BURA) meeting regarding the Tax Increment Assistance for Housing Affordability (TIAHA) and the recent Oregon Bureau of

Labor and Industries (BOLI) decision that interpreted how prevailing wage is applied to projects receiving tax rebates. BURA directed staff to adjust the TIAHA policy in how the City awards development assistance around SDCs, which are due at certificate of occupancy. BURA requested a loan from the City to satisfy Bend Park and Recreation District (BPRD) SDC's. Staff identified the Juniper Ridge Land Sales Reserve Fund as a potential source for the loan funds, as they are unrestricted.

Stuart provided background information on the Juniper Ridge Land Sales Reserve Fund, and how Council directed staff to allocate it on February 25, 2025. Stuart stated the balance of approximately $5 million, and listed other mid-term and longer-term funding challenges that the remaining funds could potentially support.

Stuart identified the four projects requesting TIAHA support. The two currently under construction (Britta Ridge and Emblem) would require $3.1 million in loans, and the two not under construction (Century and Veridian) would require $3.2-$3.7 million, which would exceed the balance of the Juniper Ridge Land Sales Reserve Fund.

Stuart asked: Does Council support providing a loan to BURA for up-front payment of BPRD SDCs? If yes, to the two projects under construction (with cash on hand), or to all four (which would require future Juniper Ridge land sales)?

Stuart clarified how the developers under construction could proceed if Council declined funding SDC, which would jeopardize the affordable housing component of the projects.

Councilors expressed some support for funding the two projects under construction, as Council committed to these projects, as well as some reservations over using unrestricted funds for these projects that could be directed to other short and mid-term City needs.

Council provided general support not to commit funding to the projects not yet under construction (Century and Veridian).

Council supported bringing a funding request for the first two projects (Britta Ridge and Emblem) to BURA and Council for discussion. Council requested staff seek additional information from the project developers regarding their target rental rates.

5. Neighborhood-Serving Commercial Market Analysis Update

Presentation by Urban Renewal Project Manager Jonathan Taylor and Michael Stumpf, Place Dynamics.

Michael Stumpf shared five findings of the Neighborhood-Serving Commercial Market Analysis:

- Bend is well served by existing retail
- Residents do not shop close to home
- Land use patterns may not assist with neighborhood commercial
- All districts compete city-wide
- Juniper Ridge is now Bend's single regional center

Councilor Platt expressed concern over the goal to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and realities of this report indicating that residents don't shop close to home.

Taylor responded that if Climate Friendly Areas develop as intended, and as Bend continues to grow eastward, more opportunities for commercial may emerge. Taylor added that defined shopping patterns can be alleviated by more shopping density if development moves forward in the Core climate friendly area and the proposed Oregon State University (OSU) Innovation District climate friendly area.

Mayor Kebler would like to identify types of businesses that are frequented primarily based on place rather than by price, and work toward improving those options, and consider zoning to allow businesses on both sides of street.

Councilor Méndez suggested considering opportunities to locate residential closer to the regional shopping Centre in Juniper Ridge.

Councilor Méndez left the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

6. **Adjourned at 6:19 p.m.**

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