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MEMO

DATE: August 31, 2022

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Spencer Nebel, City Manager

SUBJECT: Status Report for the Five-Week Period Ending Friday, August 26, 2022

During the month of September and the first week of October, there is a combination of events and vacation time occurring that will take me out of the office. I will be taking vacation time from September 9 through September 16. I will be attending the ICMA Conference in Columbus, Ohio from Saturday, September 17 through the 21st and travelling back to Newport on the 22nd. The City Council has previously excused me from the September 19 Council meeting to attend the ICMA Conference. Finally, Mayor Sawyer, Councilors Parker and Hall, Aaron Collett and I will be heading to Washington D.C. on Tuesday, September 27, to meet with various officials on inclusion of funding for Big Creek Dam in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) renewal. We will be returning to Newport on the evening of Thursday, September 29. This will be followed by the LOC Conference in Bend which runs from October 5 through the 7th. With any luck, things will settle down as we move into the heart of fall.

Highlights of activities over the five weeks include the following:

- I was on vacation from Monday, July 25 through Friday, August 5. I appreciate Peggy Hawker filling in as Acting City Manager during my absence, and City staff keeping things rolling with minimal problems during this time.
- Attended an Emergency Preparedness Committee meeting. The Committee is focusing on Big Creek Dam emergency preparedness. This includes placement of signage indicating where the evacuation assembly point would be in the event of an earthquake or Dam failure; development of information to educate people within the inundation area who would be impacted by Dam failure; utilization of various warning systems for earthquakes or a specific Dam failure; and, exploration of an automated warning should the Dam be exhibiting signs of potential failure. I appreciate the efforts of Del Lockwood in resurrecting the planning effort that was initiated by his predecessor, Regina Martinez.
- Participated in a demonstration from Neogov on an automated system to assist with the process of evaluating job performance of City employees.
- Met with Barb James and Steve Baugher regarding retaining Kay Keady on a

temporary basis following her retirement. We have had a challenge in recruiting to fill Kay's position. We appreciate Kay's willingness to continue in a temporary assignment to keep things moving along. After hiring someone to fill Kay's position, we will likely use Kay on a part-time basis to catch up on work that had to be set aside with the staffing shortages in utility billing. This shortage required Kay to perform duties in utility billing, accounts payable, room tax collection and other responsibilities, until the position was filled earlier this year. Efforts have also been compounded by the vacancy in the Finance Director's position with Steve Baugher performing both the Finance Director and the Assistant Finance Director responsibilities.

- Held bi-monthly meetings with Jason Malloy and Lance Vanderbeck.
- Held a meeting with the FAA, Lance Vanderbeck and Derrick Tokos regarding the possible sale of airport property not being used for aeronautical purposes. We will be proceeding with a request that will allow the FAA to conduct a review of the possible sale of property.
- Mayor Sawyer, Derrick Tokos and I met with a developer interested in proceeding with a project in South Beach. We have provided information to the developer that they are currently considering.
- Barb James, Andrew Grant, Dave Powell and I met to discuss issues relating to the Newport Employees Association (NEA).
- Held an internal meeting to prepare for the next negotiations session with the NEA.
- Held a bi-monthly meeting with Laura Kimberly to review various Library matters.
- Participated in a conference call with Ursula Marinelli, Leslie Ogden from Samaritan Hospital, and Dr. Breitenstein from the Health District regarding the development of a treatment center in Agate Beach. Following the discussion, the summary of the project was forwarded to City Attorney, David Allen, who has sent it to the Administrator to make sure that the construction of a treatment center would be an appropriate use of these opioid funds. We are anticipating having a report for Council's consideration on the City's participation of this project utilizing the opioid funds.
- Prepared an agenda and held the first meeting of the HB 4123 Countywide Homelessness Advisory Committee. The group elected County Commissioner, Claire Hall, as Chairman. Mayor Rod Cross of Toledo is Vice-Chair and established monthly meetings through the end of the year that will be held in the City Council Chambers. The group reviewed the initial draft RFPs. County Administrator, Tim Johnson, requested comments on the RFPs be forwarded to him by the end of that week to get the RFPs on the street the following week. I have offered to coordinate these first few meetings until a consultant is on board to take over that responsibility. There are also added challenges of looking at new initiatives by the end of the year. So far this has truly been a collaborative process. All of our local governments, including the County, are having a hard time keeping up with things. Everyone recognizes the importance of moving forward with this \$1 million demonstration grant. We are hopeful that we can develop a model that will help address homelessness on a countywide basis. I believe that this is an opportunity that none of us want to waste!
- On Thursday, August 11 through Saturday, August 13, the Oregon Mayors Association held their annual conference in Newport with Mayor Sawyer hosting

this event. We were able to live up to our slogan, “the friendliest” by coordinating several events, including an Urban Renewal tour, a bayfront/research economic tour, the Great Newport Race in which participants had to take a selfie in front of 20 locations that they identified by solving individual clues. (Three participants got all 20 selfies at various locations throughout the city. The tie-breaking question was how many miles is it to Boston, MA on US 20? The winner remembered the sign and got it exactly right!)

The City hosted the Association’s auction and reception at the aquarium on Thursday night. We appreciate the City of Lincoln City participating by financially helping to sponsor that event, along with Rogue Brewery for providing beer for the reception. I appreciate Councilors Hall and Jacobi, along with Peggy Hawker and Jason and Jody Malloy who served as greeters and guides on the aquarium grounds that night. Jason Malloy and Erik Glover hosted and coordinated the Mayor’s golf tournament at Salishan Resort.

The aquarium, which is suffering staffing shortages like the rest of us, needed help in setting up for the Tuesday evening reception. The Parks and Recreation crew spent a couple of hours assisting the aquarium in preparation for the Thursday night reception. Peggy Hawker arranged reservations for the various restaurants for a group of Mayors to eat together. This went over very well. This is something that had not been done for the Association in the past.

Mike Cavanaugh and the Parks and Recreation Department, developed several self-guided walking tours. We will be putting those tours online on our Parks and Recreation site as part of our efforts to expand identified options for touring.

Jennie Remillard from Parks and Recreation led a nature tour at Beverly Beach and arrangements were made originally on a Bay tour. Unfortunately, the boat had transmission problems. Peggy was able to get these people transferred over to a whale watching tour in which Lance Vanderbeck and Jennie Remillard helped host that event with the folks on the tour getting a close-up of the whales. Overall, I appreciate all the work that staff did to help host this event. I participated as a panelist in a discussion about the relationship between Mayors and City Managers. Overall, Mayor Sawyer indicated that he received a very favorable response and appreciation from the Mayors for the City’s job in hosting this conference.

- During this time, we also prepared the various reports and Council agendas for the work session and regular meeting held on Monday, August 15.
- Met with Jason Holland in a monthly meeting to discuss issues between the City and OCCA regarding the Performing Arts Center (PAC) and the Visual Arts Center (VAC). The OCCA has hired a new director for the VAC which will help free up Jason’s activities there.
- Held a routine Department Head meeting.
- Chaired a Zoom Nominating Committee meeting for OCCMA.
- Participated in the cyber security presentation with Department Heads.
- Participated in the Council work session, including an executive session to hear the report from the cyber consultant hired by the City to evaluate our cyber security;

an update on our wastewater master planning process; discussed the placement of red-light cameras; and, held two interviews for Planning Commission candidates.

- Participated in the regular Council meeting on August 15.
- Participated in negotiations with the NEA. We are close to concluding negotiations. I hope to get a report on this for the September 6 meeting.
- Met with the Tim Johnson, County Administrator, Paula Miranda, General Manager of the Port of Newport, and Lance Vanderbeck to discuss commercial air service for Newport. Tim and Paula would like to meet with us on a quarterly basis to explore funding to provide commercial service to Newport. This will be a critical component as NOAA considers extending its lease in Newport. I appreciate the interest from both Tim and Paula.
- Held bi-monthly meetings with Derrick Tokos, Dave Powell, Barb James, and Aaron Collett regarding their departmental operations.
- Erik Glover, Derrick Tokos, Barb James and I met to develop job descriptions for the grant manager position and the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) coordinator position. The grant manager position will report to the Community Development Department, and the URA position will report to the Assistant City Manager/City Recorder, Erik Glover. We hope to get those job descriptions out to the public in the next couple of weeks.
- Interviewed Derrick Tokos on the City's KNPT Radio Show on the transportation plan and City Center re-development planning process.
- Aaron Collett, Dave Powell and I met to discuss a recent inspection of the Big Creek Dams by the state dam engineer, and identify the next steps to move forward with the design of the project. They are working on finalizing the agreement for the distribution of funding from the State Lottery Division for Big Creek Dam engineering and permitting. We hope to get this agreement on a City Council agenda this coming month.
- Derrick Tokos, Aaron Collett and I met regarding the potential use of a LID district for improvements on a gravel portion of SE Chestnut Street. This section of street is in the URA district and the URA could pay a portion of the cost of resurfacing. I will provide some estimates back to the property owners that inquired to determine how they want to proceed with this issue.
- Rob Murphy, Barb James and I met to update our COVID-19 policy with recent changes by the CDC and State of Oregon. Please note that several requirements are still in place with Oregon OSHA. As those regulations are modified, we will continue to modify our internal policies.
- Mayor Sawyer, Councilors Parker and Hall, Aaron Collette and I met regarding the trip to Washington D.C. to advocate for funding for the Big Creek Dam. We will be flying out of Portland on Tuesday morning, September 27, and arriving back in Portland on Thursday evening, September 29. Water Strategies, our Washington, D.C. consultants, are arranging meetings with various legislative individuals, as well as with the Corps of Engineers and potentially other departments within this time. Our primary goal is to advocate for the Senate WRDA bill to include the \$60 million authorization as is included in the House version of the bill. This would be a critical piece of funding to facilitate the placement of the Big Creek Dams.

- Held bi-monthly meetings with Richard Dutton and Mike Cavanaugh.
- Met with Laura Kimberly and Barb James regarding the status of two current Library employees. One employee will go to full time and the other will switch from full time to part time. Conceptually, I have indicated that is not a problem with me, and it helps meet the desires of both the employees involved.
- Met with Barb James to discuss various pending personnel issues.
- Rob Murphy, Barb James and I are part of a work group for our internal employee organizational culture meetings focusing on salary and compensation. We will be holding a retreat for Department Heads with various recommendations coming back on ways to strengthen workplace culture in October.
- Barb James, Jody York, Rob Murphy, Steve Baugher and I met to review a plan to replace alarm systems in several buildings. It appears we have appropriate funding to proceed with projects in the 60+ Center, the VAC and City Hall. I have authorized those projects to move forward.
- Participated in a virtual meeting on possible changes to the OCCMA Senior Advisory Program.
- Erik Glover, Jason Malloy, Mike Cavanaugh and I met with Tracy Flowers to discuss the agreement for car camping in the Hurbert Street parking lot. The City entered into this agreement with Grace Wins who will be issuing permits and overseeing the use of the lot. They will coordinate with the Police Department, if there are individuals who are not following the parking lot rules. We hope that we can provide an outlet for folks that need this type of use without it being problematic to the adjacent property owners. We have notified all the property owners of these next steps.
- Held bi-monthly meetings with Jason Malloy, Rob Murphy, Lance Vanderbeck, and Laura Kimberly to discuss their various departmental issues.
- Derrick Tokos, Erik Glover, Lance Vanderbeck and I met to discuss the status of the project development of T-hangars which would be sold as condominiums by the developer. We had met with a developer interested in pursuing this type of project. There are apparently some models in Oregon that we can review. The developer was going to get some additional information to us about this project. Potentially, this would provide private hangars that would increase availability of hangar space without cost to the airport. The airport would benefit by leasing the property and the taxing entities would benefit by receiving property taxes for this development.
- Barb James and I spent the afternoon working on various aspects of the employee handbook. Progress is being made, but at a slower pace than either Barb or I would like.
- Dave Powell, Steve Baugher and I met regarding the Enterprise billing for the seven vehicles we are leasing. These leases will be charged against the department that houses each vehicle. Typically, funds are appropriated directly to an equipment purchase budget for these types of purchases and they are not born by the department. As a result, we will be doing a supplemental budget to make this shift.
- Richard Dutton provided an overview to Erik Glover on the program that he has developed to track departmental advisory boards and City Council goals. During

this discussion, we will be making several modifications to help streamline the reporting process which can be quite burdensome, particularly relating to the Council goals and objectives. I will be asking Erik to take the lead in overseeing this process.

- Peggy Hawker and I met with Erik Glover to review his job performance to date. We are focusing on City Recorder responsibilities so that Erik has a comprehensive understanding of these processes. This will be important for Erik to have a good foundation of experience in this area so that he can provide supervision for the Deputy City Recorder position that we are currently recruiting. Mayor Sawyer, Peggy Hawker, Erik Glover and I met with Beth Slade our new Coast Guard Commander, and Chief Executive Officer, Chris Brantley, to discuss the relationship between the City and the Coast Guard. Often, the relationship is dependent upon the interest of the Commanding Officer. We have had very active and community-engaged commanding officers and we have had commanding officers that were not focused on the community. I believe Commander Slade will be one that wants to be actively engaged in the community. We would like to resume our Sailor of the Quarter recognition at Council meetings, and other activities, that we have done in the past. We also indicated to her that the renewal for Newport's Coast Guard City will be coming up, and it is helpful to have active relationships with the Commanding Officer to seek out the renewal of this important relationship.
- Peggy Hawker, Erik Glover, Councilor Hall, Adam Scarberry and I met with the delegation from the Sweet Home Youth Advisory group at the Oregon Coast Aquarium. We had an opportunity to understand how their program has evolved over time. The Sweet Home Youth Council had challenges in keeping high school students engaged in this process. They basically reinvented this process to include junior high students. We are also finding that there are challenges in trying to get high school students to participate in various meetings and activities. By the time students are in high school, those students that like to be involved in activities have extremely busy schedules. We are going to follow up with Adam Scarberry's student leadership junior high equivalent, and look at expanding this program to include kids from junior high. Adam was quite enthused about looking at a broader concept, including the junior high school students. We had a great discussion with the students from Sweet Home and their advisor, City Councilor Diane Gerson.
- Dave Powell, Derrick Tokos and I met to discuss the issue of parking and transient booths located next to the lift station on the NE corner of Bay Boulevard and Hatfield. This year we have leased out all three sites for vending which created complications in trying to accommodate the informal parking that occurs on the site. The conflict between vendor booths and vehicles does not allow both to occur simultaneously. We placed barricades across the lot to make it available to the vendors which we made commitments to. We are bringing a recommendation to Council to consider potential changes that would relocate vendor booths to either the boardwalk across the street or to the Fern Plant area of the boardwalk which would accommodate several booths. It might be possible to create vendor space for up to six vendors and parking at this location.
- Held bi-monthly meetings with Steve Baugher.
- Participated in the LOC AOC update of the eight HB 4123 pilot programs to

address homelessness on a regional basis. It was helpful to understand how the other seven pilots are proceeding. I think Lincoln County, the Siletz Tribe, and the seven Cities of Lincoln County have made some good progress in the past couple of months to get on track with this program.

- Peggy Hawker and I met with Robbi Richter, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, the seven Cities of Lincoln County, and Judy Kuhl the former Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, regarding the tourism RFP renewal. We will be recommending that we proceed in a new agreement with the Chamber of Commerce going forward. We had originally received a proposal from the News-Times which was withdrawn last month. The News-Times is supportive of proceeding with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Met with Richard Dutton regarding the vacant part time AV tech position in his department. Richard would like to explore the possibility of creating a full-time technician position that would help keep up with the various departmental demands for services, as well as provide the AV services. This would allow more focus on dealing with the ever growing demands of cyber security preparation as well as the growing use of technology across all the City departments. This is something that I will review.

Upcoming Events:

- Monday, August 29, we will be providing a tour of Big Creek Dam to YBEF and County officials at 4 PM. We are also holding a town meeting at 6 PM and have extended an invitation to neighbors of Big Creek Dam for this meeting.
- August 30 is the final day to file the SEL 101 form (candidate filing form) for Mayor or City Councilor for the November 8 election. The terms of Mayor Sawyer, and Councilors Parker, Hall and Kaplan expire January 2023.
- City Hall will be closed Monday, September 5, in observation of Labor Day. The Council meetings will be held Tuesday, September 6.
- I will be on vacation from September 9 through September 16 to visit family prior to the Annual ICMA Conference in Columbus, Ohio.
- September 17 through September 22, I plan to attend the 108th Annual ICMA Conference in Columbus, Ohio. I have been excused from the City Council meetings on September 19.
- September 27 through September 29, Mayor Sawyer, Councilors Parker and Hall, Aaron Collett and I will be heading to Washington D.C. for the Big Creek Dam project.
- October 5-7 is the Annual League of Oregon Cities Conference in Bend. Peggy and Erik have registered and reserved rooms for all City Council members for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights. If your plans change, please let Peggy know by September 12 so we can cancel your registration. Also, if there are any changes to your need for rooms (i.e. arriving on Wednesday instead of Thursday, etc.) let Peggy know so that we can cancel the reservations before incurring penalties.
- Tuesday, November 8 is election day.
- City Hall will be closed Friday, November 11, in observation of Veterans' Day.
- Friday, November 16 at 11 AM an LOC's Small Cities meeting will be held.

- City Hall will be closed Thursday, November 24, and Friday, November 25, in observation of the Thanksgiving holiday.
- The LOC will be holding their elected essentials workshops at several locations in the state, including Manzanita on November 30, Depoe Bay on December 1, and Albany on December 6. These are held after the municipal elections and are intended for newly elected officials, or as a refresher for current officials.
- City Hall will be closed half day on Friday, December 23, and all day on Monday, December 26, in celebration of the Christmas holiday.
- City Hall will be closed on Monday, January 2, 2023, in observation of the New Year's holiday. The organizational meeting for Council will be scheduled for 5 PM on Tuesday, January 3, 2023, with a regular meeting to follow.

Attachments:

- Attached is the LOC announcement of the 2023 legislative priorities. One of the eight priorities is lodging tax flexibility. This is an item that Council has lobbied for. A mailing to communities that collect these significant room tax helped raise this issue on a LOC-wide basis. The next step on this matter will be to forward our position on this item to our State Representative and State Senator, and encourage other room tax communities to do the same. I will work with the LOC to determine how this can best be accomplished.
- Attached is a notice from the Oregon Mayors Association regarding the 2022-2023 "If I were Mayor" ...Student Contest. This may be something we want to actively promote, particularly in our discussions about creating a youth advisory council.
- Attached is an article on the challenges of knowing who actually is homeless in our communities. This includes those that live in trailers or RVs, who may or may not be counted as homeless individuals, since everyone living in an RV does not necessarily consider themselves homeless. It continues to show the complexities of how to deal with multiple issues relating to housing and homelessness.

It is hard to believe that Labor Day weekend is right around the corner. I hope everyone enjoys the last days of the summer of 2022!

Respectfully Submitted,

Spencer R. Nebel, City Manager

cc: Department Heads



League of Oregon Cities

(<https://www.orcities.org/>)

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LOC News

LOC Board Approves 2023 Legislative Priorities

At a special meeting today in Independence, the LOC Board of Directors unanimously adopted eight legislative priorities for cities for the 2023 and 2024 sessions. During the spring, seven policy committees met and selected a list of **28 legislative priorities** (https://www.orcities.org/download_file/view/2439/1434) for the LOC's membership to rank. Cities submitted their ballots over the past 3 months, and the LOC Intergovernmental Relations team then developed a list of the top eight priorities where their efforts will be focused over the next two years. These priorities were based on the overall votes received, with 135 cities responding to the ballot ranking process and more than 80% of the registered votes coming from cities with less than a population of 20,000.

Please note - the remaining priorities will still be part of the LOC's core advocacy work for over the next two sessions and board-will remain key issues for the LOC lobby team.

The following are the LOC's top eight legislative priorities for 2023 and 2024:

1) *Infrastructure Financing and Resilience*

The LOC will advocate for an increase in the state's investment in key infrastructure funding sources, including, but not limited to, the Special Public Works Fund (SPWF), Brownfield Redevelopment Fund, Regionally Significant Industrial Site program, and set asides through the SPWF for seismic resilience planning and related infrastructure improvements to make Oregon water and wastewater systems more resilient. In addition, the LOC will advocate for funding resources of critical infrastructure that provides incentives for needed housing so there are more affordable housing options available.

2) *Local Funding to Address Homelessness*

The LOC will seek funding to support coordinated, local responses to addressing homelessness. The LOC recognizes that to end homelessness, a statewide and community-based coordination approach to delivering services, housing, and programs is needed. Addressing homelessness will look different and involve different service provider partners from one city to the next, but one thing is consistent, addressing the crisis requires significant financial resources.

3) *Address Measure 110 Shortcomings*

The LOC will support restoration of criminal justice incentives for seeking treatment for addiction, while ensuring a path for expungement for successfully completing a treatment program.

4) Economic Development Incentives

The LOC will support legislation to preserve and strengthen discretionary local economic development incentives including the Enterprise Zone (EZ), Long Term Rural Enterprise Zone (LTREZ) and Strategic Investment Program (SIP).

5) Community Resiliency and Wildfire Planning

The LOC will support investments for climate and wildfire resiliency planning, as well as infrastructure upgrades, to fill existing gaps and assist cities in planning for extreme weather events and wildfire.

6) Transportation Safety Enhancement

The LOC supports legislation that improves the overall safety of the transportation network in communities. The LOC will achieve this outcome by expanding authority for establishing fixed photo radar to all cities, increasing flexibility for local speed setting authority, and increased investment in the "safe routes to schools" and expansion of the "great streets" programs.

7) Full Funding and Alignment for State Land Use Initiatives

The LOC will support legislation to streamline and fully fund local implementation of any recently adopted or proposed state land use planning requirements, including administrative rulemaking.

8) Lodging Tax Flexibility

The LOC will advocate for legislation to enhance flexibility in how cities may use transient lodging tax revenues. The goal is to help cities better serve visitors and improve local conditions that support the tourism industry.

Organizational Priorities

Oregon's cities are concerned by the state's growing reliance on local governments to implement new state policy with little or no resources to support the changes at the local level. Cities have been challenged by new state requirements for expanded service delivery of homeless services, extensive and unfunded land use planning updates, changes in public safety policy, and land use updates for wildfire risk reduction. Cities will play a critical role in implementing changes in policy, but the state needs to recognize the limitations of local resources and support cities in these efforts.

In addition to the legislative priorities listed above, the LOC Board adopted a set of organizational priorities, including the addition of property tax reform, which was second in the overall membership rankings. By adding property tax reform to the priority list, the board has effectively elevated the significance of the issue. The following are the adopted organizational priorities:

- **Reform Oregon's Property Tax System.** *The current system based on Measures 5 and 50 that were adopted by voters in the 1990s is inequitable to property owners and jurisdictions alike, is often inadequate to allow jurisdictions to provide critical services, removes meaningful local choice, and is incomprehensible to most taxpayers. Reform has been a longstanding priority for cities and the LOC will continue to advocate for constitutional and statutory reforms to enhance local choice, equity, fairness, and adequacy.*
- **Avoid Unfunded Mandates.** *During recent legislative sessions, our cities have been inundated with mandates that require them to take on additional work and shift priorities away from locally identified priorities to those that the state deems to be of greater importance.*
- **Preserve Local Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Authority.** *While local communities often face similar challenges, the solutions and tools necessary to address those challenges are rarely the same for each local community. What works in one city, may not work in another.*
- **Preserve Local Revenue Streams.** *Local governments only have a few tools in their toolbox when it comes to sources that fund essential city services. With federal pandemic aid coming to an end and inflation at historic levels cities will start to rely more on the finite revenues from state shared revenues, franchise/ROW fees, lodging taxes, and property taxes. Therefore, these revenue streams should be preserved at all costs.*

- **Support Policies that Provide Local Tools and Resources.** *We recognize that the state budget is severely constrained, and we are committed to recognizing this reality as we pursue legislative and programmatic investments. We ask that the state similarly recognize the budget realities of local governments and work to identify opportunities for targeted investments and tools to address needs at the local level.*
- **Avoiding Shifting of Additional Costs onto Local Government Partners.** *We are concerned that decreased general fund revenues could result in further shifting of state programmatic costs on local governments. This includes program funding that includes a split of general fund and fees that may be paid by local governments. Any increase in fees to support state programs should be accompanied by an equitable increase in general fund investment. Increased costs to local governments mean increased costs for our residents, or further cuts to the services they rely on.*

Survey results from the Priority Ballot can be accessed [here](https://www.orcities.org/download_file/view/2438/1434) (https://www.orcities.org/download_file/view/2438/1434).

Contact: Jim McCauley, Legislative Director - jmccauley@orcities.org (<mailto:jmccauley@orcities.org>)

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 **503-588-6550** (<tel:5035886550>)

 loc@orcities.org (<mailto:loc@orcities.org>)

Spencer Nebel

From: Debi Higgins <dhiggins@orcities.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 25, 2022 3:51 PM
Cc: Debi Higgins
Subject: Announcing the 2022-23 OMA Student Contest Kickoff!
Attachments: 2022-23 Invitation Letter from Mayor Gowing English.pdf; 2022-23 Invitation Letter from Mayor Gowing Spanish.pdf; 2022-23 Contest Information English.pdf; 2022-23 Contest Information Spanish.pdf; 2022-23 Student Contest Flyer English Fillable.pdf; 2022-23 Student Contest Flyer Spanish Fillable.pdf; 2022-23 OMA Entry Form - English Fillable.pdf; 2022-23 OMA Entry Form - Spanish - Fillable.pdf; What Does a Mayor Do - English.pdf; What does a Mayor Do - Spanish.pdf; What Services Do Oregon Cities Provide flyer - English.pdf; What Services Do Oregon Cities Provide flyer - Spanish.pdf

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Hello Mayors, City Recorders and CAO's,

Announcing the 2022-23 OMA "If I Were Mayor..." Student Contest is now live!

This fun and educational contest can be incorporated into your school year's curriculum by reaching out to your local schools and home-school organizations. Please consider giving your students the chance to learn more about public service and local government, and a chance to voice their ideas. They come up with some GREAT ideas that mayors have taken back to their cities.

Here is how it works:

1. Your city has a local contest (can be announced at city council meetings, promoted through newspapers, newsletters, schools, etc.)
2. One winner from each category of local contests can submit their entries to the state contest for a chance to win the prize and recognition.
3. Winners of the state contest are invited to the OMA Summer Conference Award Luncheon for presentation of the prizes.

All the information you need for the 2022-23 contest is attached to this email [and can be found here](#) to promote your local contest.

The winners of last year's 2021-22 Student Contest are announced at this link:
<https://www.oregonmayors.org/special-programs/page/2021-22-student-contest-winners>.

For questions about the contest, please contact Angela Speier at aspeier@orcities.org.

Best,
Debi



Debi Higgins, *Administrative Assistant*
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America's first homelessness problem: Knowing who is actually homeless

The unhoused are often hidden. Seattle is testing a new method to find them.

By [Kyle Swenson](#)

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SEATTLE — Handwritten notes were everywhere, taped into car windows or tucked under windshield wipers or scrawled across van doors. They were public announcements and cryptic rants — tiny splashes of individuality amid the anonymity of garbage piles and ripped tarps surrounding the trailers and campers parked near the railroad tracks south of downtown.

"Sick sleeping do NOT wake up," one on a camper said. "I have narcan spray," said another. "DO NOT TOW MY HOME!" stated a third.

Toward the end of July, one more sign began appearing at the encampment. "Notice," the warning from the city said. "Order to remove all personal property." The area would be cleared July 26.

John and Michelle Tirado's 17-foot trailer stood near a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The windows inside were blocked so they could sleep for their evening shifts as security guards at an abandoned foundry, both temporary jobs with no benefits. They had been living in the encampment for four months. When they arrived, they were sleeping in their GMC Yukon, an SUV. Later the couple found the trailer on Facebook for \$1,700 — better than sleeping in the car, and more affordable than the deposit and first and last month's rent needed for an apartment. But the Tirados couldn't help feeling that they were bobbing between bad and slightly better, while still on a general slide into worse.

"Some people would count that as a home, but it's not," Michelle, 33, said of the trailer they would soon have to move. "It's a space where we survive."

"We are homeless," John, 32, said. "We hate it."

Until last year, the federal government did not always include people like the Tirados or the others living in trailers within sight of the sun-polished towers of downtown Seattle in its annual tally of the homeless, a reflection of what advocates, academics and policymakers say, is a flawed methodology that underlies billions in spending on homelessness.

Getting that figure right has gained new urgency as rising housing costs and a persistent shortage of

affordable housing mean more people have fewer options when it comes to shelter. Tent cities now sprawl across sidewalks, along overpasses and over green spaces in many major American cities. The visibility of homelessness has triggered a wave of municipal and state laws criminalizing it. Advocates also say violent confrontations between the housed and unhoused appear to have increased.

At the local, state and federal level, governments rely on annual estimates of the homeless population to direct billions of dollars in spending. But few advocates, academics or public officials believe those estimates are accurate. Compiled by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), they are technocratic best-guesses, hammered together using a handful of methods many believe are inadequate.

"It gives Congress a false picture of the true magnitude of the problem," said Donald Whitehead, executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless. "We need to have accurate data if we are going to provide accurate solutions."

For years, advocates have pushed the government to improve the annual count, by broadening the official definition of homelessness and adopting new methods to count unsheltered populations. There are a number of proposals circulating. Until recently they have mostly been theoretical. Then earlier this year in Seattle, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) decided to field test a new method, which combined policy wonks and street organizers to capture populations that had been missed in HUD's Point-In-Time (PIT) count, a key component of the federal government's homeless population estimate.

HUD spokeswoman Shantae Goodloe acknowledged the difficulties inherent in the undertaking but defended the agency's methods.

"Given this monumental task, it is likely that communities do not find every single person experiencing homelessness, but we are confident they identify most people, and this consistent counting effort allows an analysis of trends from year to year that help us gauge whether homelessness is rising or falling across the country," Goodloe said. "The PIT count data is the only data source that collects data on our unsheltered population across the entire country."

Goodloe also noted that there are support programs for families regardless of whether they fall into the official definition of homelessness. "Expanding the homeless definition does not resolve the reality that there are simply not enough resources for the high demand for people who live in precarious housing situations," she said.

For the Tirados, the gap between policy and reality has meant painful choices.

As they spent their last nights at the encampment, they had no idea where they would go next. They did, however, know that they would not be joining their five children and John's mother and sister at a local homeless shelter. When the family had arrived in Seattle, there were not enough beds for everyone to stay together at the facility. They had been split ever since, and would remain apart until the Tirados found a place big enough that they could afford.

A housing emergency

On a Saturday morning in July, Marvin Futrell, 57, wheeled his car down the narrow lane where the Tirados' trailer was parked. Around 55 other campers and RVs filled the street. He was doing his own informal count.

"Let's just say one person lives in each. That's 55 displaced people and probably more living in each one," Futrell said as he rolled by the encampment. "But the system doesn't recognize folks living in RVs as homeless." He then glanced back at the image of the RV encampment shrinking in his rearview mirror. "The response that we have now isn't enough."

Futrell kept a map in his head of Seattle and King County, a shifting picture of where people without homes tended to gather. Some were places he'd spent the night himself during his years living on the streets. Other were floating communities he had come to know as an organizer, camps and tiny house villages he had helped avoid police sweeps or wage legal battles with the city. Those experiences had now landed Futrell a position with the county's homelessness response.

"We're not treating an emergency like an emergency," he said. "My work is to start treating this housing emergency like an emergency."

He sees a more accurate count of the city's unhoused as vital to any solution, but for more than a decade governments have relied in part on HUD's Point-In-Time count, an annual tally of homeless people each year during one night in the last week of January. Volunteers and outreach workers walk the streets and count the number of unsheltered homeless individuals they spot. The results are combined with the total population of a region's homeless shelters, as well as data from a region's homeless management information system, a database that tracks services delivered to individuals experiencing homelessness. Other government agencies, such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Education Department, also track homelessness, but HUD's data is considered authoritative.

Congress approves and funnels out the majority of the country's financial response to homelessness on the basis of these numbers. The PIT count was inaugurated in 2007 in part to see whether the federal government's money was making an impact.

Over time, however, academics and advocates have criticized HUD's approach. "The HUD data is just catching a fraction of the people," said Samuel Carlson, the manager of research and outreach at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

"It's not the best measure, because it's a count on one night only. But also communities end up doing it all different ways; there is not a standardized way," said Jack Tsai, a professor and dean of the University of Texas School of Public Health in San Antonio, who has written on the topic. "We don't even look at the per capita or proportion of the total community that is unsheltered. But this is the main benchmark we use every year."

Some of the most pointed criticism about HUD's methodology comes from a 2021 review by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which knocked the department for not providing local entities with examples of how to properly use data to supplement the PIT count. A 2020 GAO report found HUD does not "closely examine" the methodologies local entities are using to produce their counts, leading to confusion and inconsistencies between various agencies and general "questions about data accuracy."

Since the GAO report, "HUD has published resources to assist communities with their sampling efforts and is in the process of working on additional resources to help communities conduct more

accurate counts,” Goodloe said.

King County officials realized they were missing thousands of homeless individuals in their region when they began an overhaul of countywide data in 2018. They found a substantial gap between traditional homeless counts and the number of people who identified themselves as homeless when entering either the local homeless health-care network or the county’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Division.

By comparing various databases, they found that 40,800 of the county’s total 2.2 million residents experienced homelessness at some point in 2020. Before the new analysis, the county had estimated that figure to be 33,500 based on data from its Homeless Management Information System. The PIT count total for 2020 was 11,751.

The report also determined that 7,300 people in the county who were experiencing homelessness had accessed county behavioral health or homeless healthcare systems but were left out of the other databases.

Finding the people the survey missed became the mission of the KCRHA, which began operating in mid-2021 as a regional solution to what had long been a contentious local issue. The upheaval of the pandemic opened a door for a new approach, said Marc Dones, the authority’s chief executive.

“There are real methods. There are real ways to do this,” Dones said. “Asking people to go out on a night in January and be like, ‘I thought I saw a person in a tent’ is not a method.”

‘Soon we’ll be back together’

Michelle Tirado sat on the ground twisting a jack that was propping the trailer up. She and her husband were preparing to leave the encampment ahead of the July 26 sweep. She strained against the metal, her red-dyed hair flashing in the dull sun. The couple would need to move soon, and the encampment was chaotic as others prepared to do the same.

The Tirados had arrived in Seattle in spring after living on a relative’s property in a nearby county. The family included the five kids — ages 3 to 11 years old — John’s mother and his grown sister, who is disabled. Once the relative passed away, all nine headed to Seattle to find work. When they couldn’t immediately secure housing, the children and John’s mother and sister went to a local shelter, and John and Michelle Tirado hit the streets. Even after landing jobs working security at \$15.50 an hour, they couldn’t put together the needed funds for rent.

“We’re trying everything we can to move forward, but it’s so tough with a family of nine,” John Tirado said. “The thing that I hate the most is that we put in a lot of hours at work so we can afford to get a place, so we will be able to afford rent. But you have to make like three times the rent, and have first and last deposit. It’s hard.”

By the end of July, being separated from their children was beginning to wear them down.

“I’m used to doing the mom thing, I’m used to cooking the kids’ meals,” Michelle Tirado said. The most difficult part was trying to explain the situation to them without letting on how desperate the circumstances were. “We say that it’s a journey that we’re all on and that soon we’ll be back together,” she said.

Their plan to move the RV away from the encampment ran aground when, as they were moving it, the axle snapped, rendering the vehicle essentially useless.

Rather than return to sleeping in the car, John and Michelle moved in with a friend until they decided what to do next.

‘Where are you sleeping?’

The key challenge with counting the members of a homeless population is that it is a community that often prefers not to be noticed.

The method Dones and the team set out to create aimed to be both a head count and a megaphone, quantitative numeration fused with an opportunity to record testimonies from the homeless community.

The KCRHA’s team settled on a plan to set up 10 hubs at locations across the region, from libraries to food banks to health clinics. A handful of volunteers at each hub would be responsible for taking subjects through a series of questions about their experiences with homelessness:

Where are you sleeping?

During this time, what things or people have been helpful to you?

During this time, what things or people have not been helpful – or may have been harmful – to you?

Dones wanted the findings to be bulletproof to any criticism. The team estimated it needed at least 500 interviews from members of “historically marginalized communities who are not believed.”

Futrell sat in on the early planning meetings for the new count. He suggested where the hubs could go to best capture the rhythms of homelessness in the area. And he had a further suggestion that would help make or break the experiment: staff the hubs not with just any volunteers, but people also experiencing homelessness.

More determined than hopeful

In March, the KCRHA team began conducting the new surveys across the county.

“Where are you sleeping?” they asked at a public library.

“How has your health affected your living situation?” they asked at a food bank. “How has your living situation affected your health?”

“How do you earn money now?” they asked at a young adult shelter.

Alex Finch, 31, was staffing one of the hubs near the airport. He had been homeless for a handful of years, living in tent encampments and now in a Seattle tiny house village. He volunteered as part of the KCRHA’s new homeless count because “I wanted to be one of the people keeping them honest,” he said.

But even Finch was surprised by what he was told. "Most of the complaints that I heard were attacks by people who were housed," he said. "I talked with someone who had their RV assaulted with urine bottles. Another was the victim of attempted arson."

Finch also said that it was clear many people he interviewed had not been counted in earlier PIT estimates. It was a realization shared by many who helped run the survey. They found that the new methodology helped coax people out of hiding.

"I interviewed people who actually lived in the woods," said Owen Kajfasz, the KCRHA's deputy chief community impact officer. "We were able to count people who literally were telling me, 'I've never talked with anybody who works in homeless services before.' "

The volunteers also found that many people they interviewed were experiencing homelessness for the first time, including seniors who had maxed out their savings and could not pay Seattle's spiking housing costs. Others were eager for the opportunity to record their stories.

"What the method told us alone is that there are a lot more people who want to be seen and be heard than the previous methodology allowed for," Dones said.

Using the data collected from the surveys, the KCRHA was able to submit a number to HUD for its homelessness count — 13,368, compared with 11,751, the Point-In-Time count total for 2020.

Dones is confident the new methodology not only produces a more accurate numerical understanding of the homeless community, but also a vast bank of stories attesting to the experience of homelessness. The KCRHA will release a detailed analysis this fall.

No method is perfect, though. And two testimonies that will be missing from that new store of knowledge are those of John and Michelle Tirado.

The couple never made it to a hub to be interviewed and soon will be quitting King County altogether. They plan on pushing east, over the mountains cupping the Seattle area, to look for work.

"I wouldn't say we're hopeful. It's more that we are determined," John Tirado said. "If we haven't failed yet, we refuse to start now."

The goal is to get jobs, save money for housing, then bring the five kids and John's mother and sister to wherever they land, be a family again. Until then, the couple will be living in a tent.

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