

## City Manager's Update — July 15, 2020

Prepared for Mayor and Councilors. Please contact Steve Powers, City Manager, for additional information.

### ***At Your Service***

From happy residents,

Last week my husband decided to change the shutoff valve to my 1930's house and in the process broke the brittle PVC pipe that brought the water into the house. Kevin and Darrel showed up quickly when I called Public Works Dispatch and turned it off. They could have come and gone but they exemplified outstanding customer service with their great personalities and knowledge. Several days later after my husband and I excavated the pipe I called dispatch to have them inspect the connection and work with the meter issue. The meter was deteriorated and leaking slightly so Kevin and Darrel removed the meter with its myriad of connectors. My husband decided to replace the PVC with copper, so Kevin helped him with the cities' requirements for attachment. Today Kevin came back, and he installed a new meter. I did not expect them to show up as quickly as I went the 4th of July weekend with no water. Kevin and Darrel are hard workers and exemplify great customer service. Let them know that this resident appreciates them with their great attitudes and great customer service. They are a great asset to the city of Salem.

I LOVE the Virtual Public Works Day! Each icon was so intriguing, and you made learning about city functions fun.

This is a thank you to your street cleaner crew. Since working from home, I see the frequency the truck comes through my neighborhood. I wanted to tell you and the crew how much I appreciate this service. My neighborhood is not the most elite, but I pay my taxes just the same and it is nice to see my neighborhood matters.

### ***Communications***

Emily Enders is the City's new Public Information Officer. She's an amazing asset to the City. Emily comes to us directly from Central Washington University, where she has been an assistant professor in communications and public relations. Prior to that, she was with a start-up health sciences university, building a brand and compelling story used in all internal and external communications. Earlier, she managed public affairs for Chemeketa Community College. Emily's well-versed in emergency communications from her time in the National Guard.

### ***Community Development***

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, Building and Safety (B&S) completed 2,375 first plan reviews and 28,208 inspections in all disciplines (structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems). The Permit Application Center completed 20,569 transactions. B&S permitted 454 new houses, 694 apartment units and 130 new commercial buildings. The total development valuation exceeded \$696 million. This is a record year. The plans were reviewed within the time set in service goals.

## **COVID-19**

The City is requesting on behalf of Arches, \$400,000 in federal reimbursement for the program that shelters medically vulnerable individuals in hotels. New rules were clarified last week that allow cities to apply based upon the State's health orders, rather than on county level public health orders. Polk and Marion are not applying for this funding. If awarded to the City, the funds could be reallocated to critical homelessness needs.

The City's roadmap for reopening operations is final. The plan provides a uniform minimum standard for city-wide for reopening of facilities and services. If interested in the 100+ page plan, please let Tami or me know. Many City services were unchanged by COVID-19. City parks remained open. Police and Fire responded to calls. Public Works maintained streets, kept our drinking water flowing, and made sure our toilets flushed. About 800 of the City's 1,250 employees kept doing what they do—serving the community.

The City has an updated remote work personnel policy to continue the robust work from home and telework that has been occurring for the past three months.

The City's website is the primary communication tools for the City to deliver information to the community. While it is not the only mechanism to provide information, the data shows that from the beginning of the pandemic, and in May when additional information was provided, the total users and views over the prior year for the same period increased by 13 to 39 percent.

Since reopening, the Payment Center (cashiers, bill paying) has averaged 34 each day or about 8.5% of the 400 daily in-person customers before COVID. The Permit Application Center has served about 20 or so customers a day. This number is much less than expected, less than 10% of total customer volume. Most customers continue to prefer on-line services.

Contactless curbside Library service is going well. One Library Advisory Board member described it as "seamless" and since the pilot began, we've already served more than 850 patrons. Appointments are now pretty much filling up daily and staff are pulling 500+ items for holds a day. Total online Library services have increased, with 183% in new patron registrations, representing more than 800 from March to May 2020, and registered over 2,300 individuals for the Summer Reading program.

## **Demonstrations**

Demonstrations are continuing. The City's efforts to share information regarding impacts from demonstrations, such as street closures, have caused questions regarding City sponsorship or endorsement of the demonstration or protest. To inform the public when necessary for a planned demonstration and to reduce confusion regarding the City's role, procedures will be:

- No social media posts or releases about pending street closures unless they are a City project (construction project), related to an act of nature (flooding or landslide), or if a permit has been issued to close streets.

- When we do share another street closure due to a march, protest or demonstration, it will be for a major disruption – weekday, high traffic volume street, long duration. A short duration inconvenience, like a train blocking a street, does not merit a citywide announcement through social media.
- Some of these notices may be more isolated in their impact and will be done through Next Door or another social media tool.
- When we do share information, the information will not include the permittee, the purpose of the demonstration, or how many participants are expected.
- For impromptu or unorganized events, the City will share information or not, depending on the circumstances.

### ***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***

Upon request, the City provides Spanish and American Sign Language interpreters for council, board, and commission meetings. The cost of providing ASL at all council meetings regardless of whether there is a request, while ideal, exceeds what we can expend while meeting our other obligations. We researched the possibility of partnerships with education or other volunteers and concluded that would not be workable. We were able to add live captioning to stream—and we understand that is helpful and appreciated by some in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. We remain committed to filling requests that we receive if there is a person who requires ASL to participate fully in a City Council meeting.

### ***Federal***

Salem’s Census response rate is at 65.3% as of June 15, 2020. As of May 21<sup>st</sup> Oregon was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the country for best response rate. People can complete the census online or by phone or request a paper copy. The census bureau will coordinate a specific outreach to count people experiencing homelessness on September 22, 23 & 24. A community led effort, entitled [We Count Oregon](#), provides tool kits, some information translated in several languages, and other information to help encourage everyone in Oregon to participate.

### ***Fireworks***

From June 23rd through July 6th, the Fire Department responded to 35 fire incidents. Of the 35 incidents, five were confirmed to have a heat source of fireworks. For one incident, it could be confirmed that the firework was a bottle rocket. Salem Police responded to 54 fireworks complaints between June 23 and July 6, 2020. The fire and police calls are consistent with past years. The 10-year historical fire loss from any fireworks in Salem is very low. Noise complaints are likely caused by illegal fireworks such as mortars with the loud explosions and anything that flies in the air and explodes. The challenge is enforcement. The Fire and Police departments do not have resources to respond to and enforce noise complaints due to the use of illegal fireworks. A total ban of all fireworks in Salem would be a significant long-term investment in enforcement personnel. With our historically low fire loss, Chief Niblock recommends continuing with education regarding safe use of fireworks. If interested in additional detail, please contact Fire Chief Niblock.

## ***Housing and Shelter***

ODOT has been instructed not to clean-up or remove camps in state rights-of-way (under bridges, near off ramps) at this time because of COVID. ODOT's response to the City's request to clean-up areas was if the occupants of the area are creating a safety issue for the public, the residents should contact police.

Staff continue to work with Arches on a shelter and navigation center in the North Gateway Urban Renewal Area. Urban renewal funds can be used for site improvements. Operations funding was requested from the legislature, and the City and Arches are prepared to seek funding in the upcoming special session. The site would be used for up to 18 months. Upcoming steps include discussions with the neighbors, neighborhood association and the North Gateway Urban Renewal Advisory Board.

The Salem Housing Authority has added a downtown outreach position to help connect unsheltered individuals with services and housing. The position is scheduled to be filled by the end of July.

Redwood Crossing is nearing completion. The Salem Housing Authority (SHA) anticipates having a temporary occupancy permit by the end of July. Leasing will start August 1, 2020 for the first round of tenants. SHA is working with the City's emergency operations staff to ensure the opening follows COVID restrictions and guidelines. City funds will help purchase additional signage, cleaning materials, personal protective equipment, and necessary items to help keep staff and residents safe in this building.

## ***Library***

Construction continues at a rapid pace. Demolition is nearly complete on the interior. Howard S. Wright (HSW) poured concrete for the exterior and interior shear wall footings and exterior walls. Forming and pouring the walls will continue over the next several weeks. HSW continues to make safety a priority related to COVID-19. Masks, hand washing, and social distancing during construction activities is still an emphasis on the entire jobsite. HSW has been able to safely accommodate the 20-40 workers currently onsite.

The renovation project provides an opportunity to consider changes to Library parking. There are three options:

- Remove existing meters and replace with a kiosk to provide more convenient parking payment.
- Provide 3-hour free parking like downtown parking model.
- Provide free parking with no limitations.

City Council's subcommittee will be discussing the three options.

Final shelving design provides the Library with more shelving than the Library had prior to construction.

Additional improvements to the main entry are under review. HSW is currently getting pricing for ideas that have been developed by the architect. The subcommittee will be able to evaluate the cost against available contingency when any risks related to COVID and/or other unknowns can be fully defined. One major remaining undefined risk item outside of pandemic impacts includes asbestos abatement on the roof. We should have a better understanding of the contingency budget capacity by the end of this summer.

The inaugural edition of Library Construction Chapters is a “virtual groundbreaking.” You may access the [Construction Chapters Here](#). The series will go on to provide status updates and highlights as the project progresses.

## **Management**

We are at the point in the life of the City contract with Travel Salem for destination marketing services that we need to do a request for proposals. The opportunity to submit proposals will be advertised soon.

## **Parks**

Parks operations continues to be strained by COVID-19. For several reasons, staffing is down compared to past years. Inmate crews are not available. Volunteering is way down. Parks is cleaning restrooms, drinking fountains, and playground equipment more frequently as required by the phase 2 reopening. We continue to provide trash removal to the camping areas in two parks. Sports fields are back in use, and recreational programs have resumed. We are hiring more seasonal staff. Community service workers are slowly returning. Many small projects are delayed, and we will likely be trying to catch-up the rest of the year.

Site work for the Gerry Frank Rotary Amphitheater has started. The contractor, Emery & Sons, hit the ground running. In the first four days of they were able to completely clear and grub the site, begin grading work, and start preparations to expand the parking lot. Utility work will begin next week starting with the water line before moving to the storm drain improvements. The Carousel Shuttle is in operation. Currently, Emery is working a four-day schedule to allow for the parking lot to be open on Friday’s through the weekend. However, Emery has indicated that as work progresses, there may be work activities that they would like to complete on Friday’s. These work activities will be sporadic and will be completed early prior to the Carousel opening to minimize impact. This would allow Emery to maintain their schedule to complete the work on time. The Carousel is supportive of the scheduling change.

## **Policing**

COVID-19 will be changing the school year, likely requiring more virtual learning. Staff are working on the school resource officers work session that City Council requested be held with the Salem Keizer School District. The work session will be scheduled when there is more clarity regarding the upcoming school year. In the meantime, staff will be providing councilors with information on the school resource officers program.

Staff are working on information for the second work session requested by City Council, the Police Department's responses to, and resources for non-criminal status and behaviors (persons in mental health crisis, unsheltered persons).

The Police Department will be participating in an event by Youth With A Mission to bring BIPOC and law enforcement government together. Youth With A Mission has 20+ years of experience of bringing very diverse groups together to build cooperation, trust, communication and leadership.

### **Police Station**

The Police Station construction schedule has had a several-week delay in the supply of precast concrete beams and columns for the parking structure. This was caused by impacts from COVID-19 at Knife River's fabrication plant in Harrisburg, OR. Erection of the parking structure was a critical path activity for completion of the project and the project team has been working on ways to mitigate the delay. The original substantial completion date for the entire project was September 18, 2020. That date will remain the same for the Police Station building and public plaza. October 30 will be the substantial completion date for the parking structure and the remaining site work such as on-grade parking and landscaping. This allows us to maintain our planned schedule for public tours and moving while construction outside of the building finishes up. The current schedule of activities:

- ✓ September 18 – Building substantially complete
- ✓ Last 2 weeks of September – Complete building punch list items
- ✓ Mid-October – Public tours and grand opening activities
- ✓ Mid-October – Department begins moving in
- ✓ October 30 – Entire project substantially complete
- ✓ Mid-November – Complete punch list items, project final completion
- ✓ November 30 – Moving complete

### **Policy Agenda**

The contract to help the City develop a climate action plan has been awarded to the Verdis Group. The Verdis Group will be conducting baseline research, building a dashboard, facilitating public engagement, and other tasks necessary for a meaningful and actionable climate action plan. The anticipated time to complete the plan is 12 months. There will be extensive public engagement, including an advisory committee, and interested organizations are being contacted. The work will be coordinated with Our Salem.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements that will be helped by SKATS funding:

- Commercial Street SE: Vista Street SE to Ratcliff Drive SE / \$3.2M / 2026
- Pedestrian Safety Improved Crossings: Installation of enhanced pedestrian crossings at: River Road. N at River Road City Park, Lancaster Drive. NE at Weathers Street NE and Lancaster Drive NE between Wolverine Street NE and Sunnyview Road NE, and State

Street at 19th Street SE and State Street at 21<sup>st</sup> Street SE / \$1.2M / 2024

- McGilchrist Street SE at 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Ave SE / \$4.3M / 2023
- Orchard Heights Road NW: Snowbird Drive NW to Westhaven Avenue NW / \$1.7M / 2024

### ***Upcoming Issues***

Staff have convened the Water/Wastewater Task Force. Staff provide a utility rate proposal to City Council on a biennial basis. As a part of the recommended rate development process, Public Works convenes the Water/Wastewater Task Force. The Task Force meets for two or three meetings every other year to review the rate proposal prior to proceeding to City Council. The task force is made up of four City Councilors and representatives from the Utility's largest customers, as well as the Chamber and SEDCOR.

The drop-in lottery revenue has resulted in the City not receiving \$20 million for water projects. The state was scheduled to issue bonds, funded by lottery revenue, in spring 2021. The change will not impact the ozone project at Geren Island or other water projects underway. The state funding would have assisted the City with future water system improvement projects. The City's Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that will be developed for next fiscal year (2022-2026) for the budget committee and council will include changes to offset the loss of the state funding.

Thanks for reading,  
Steve