

## City Manager's Update — October 2, 2020

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

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

A little noticed (thankfully) City operation that serves more than 200,000 people is the Willow Lake Pollution Control Facility. The management, operational, and technical abilities and expertise of the wastewater staff are impressive. An example, Craig Budrow, one of the City's wastewater treatment plant operators, has been selected as the regional operator of the year. Craig was nominated by the supervisory staff with supporting comments such as, "Craig is one of the most honorable, dedicated and humble individuals I have ever met". He is the kind of Operator everyone would like to have on their crew". Craig quickly acknowledged that while he received the award, the recognition really goes to the entire Willow Lake team.

### ***Census***

Throughout the Census effort, the City has shared and translated messaging to the community on the importance of participating. We've folded in one message a week to our social media schedule. The City has aided and provided Salem-specific information to Census staff doing targeted events. Nonprofit partners received grants to do targeted outreach for BIPOC populations, including Mano a Mano. As of September 29, 2020, Oregon is at 99.3% of housing units enumerated. 68.9% have self-responded and 30.4% have been counted via nonresponse follow-up. The count continues until October 31, 2020.

[Have you filled out your 2020 Census yet?](#)



### ***COVID***

On October 1, the Oregon Health Authority reported the addition of 353 cases statewide overnight. This overnight addition of new cases is significant as it is greater than the average daily new cases being added in each month since the pandemic began. The last half of September averaged 256, significantly greater than the whole month average of 227.

FEMA has approved Governor Brown's request, made on behalf of the City, for a waiver to allow the MidWillamette Valley Community Action Agency's hotel program to be eligible for federal funding. The waiver will allow Community Action to reopen its hotel program to assist Salem unsheltered residents. According to OEM, the City took quick, prudent action under emergency circumstances by standing up a non-congregate sheltering operation to protect the lives, health and public safety of its residents. The hotel program provides isolation/quarantine facilities for people who cannot self-quarantine if required or who test positive for COVID-19 and cannot self-isolate.

The success is due to the tenacity of Gretchen Bennett and the expertise and work of a City team, including Natasha Zimmerman and Brian Luse with Legal, Jeremy Morgan with Finance, the City's Emergency Operations experts Cord Vanderhae with Fire and Stephen Smith with Police, and Ashley Hamilton with Community Action. Staff are reviewing the conditions of the waiver to ensure the City and Community Action comply.

## **Downtown**

Staff is working on transitioning the street dining to a new dining-platform program that could be year-round. Staff are working with downtown businesses on interest and questions, such as compliance with fire codes.

The current Summer Streets will continue for the next couple of weeks if good weather continues.

The Salem Saturday Market is interested in having their weekend holiday market downtown. Staff are working on making the first floor of the Chemeketa Parkade and the plaza area between that parking area and JC Penney available. The market staff will be doing outreach to downtown retailers to try to work out a host situation where market vendors can have little pop-up spaces within other establishments to help attract attention downtown to the market and to other retailers.

Planning is underway for the next phase of the streetscape project. COVID has had some impact on how we will continue moving forward with this because we want to be very sensitive to business impacts. We don't want to take sidewalks offline in areas where there are a lot of restaurants that need expanded outdoor dining.

Council's Finance Committee reviewed and supported a \$9.7 million borrowing for the Riverfront Downtown Urban Renewal Area. The debt would be repaid by the tax increment revenue collected from within the urban renewal area. Expenditures included in the borrowing are the toolbox grant program, streetscape improvement & design, alley lighting improvements, Union Street bike friendly improvements, and opportunity purchases for future redevelopment. The borrowing would have a 10-year term with a 2.83% estimated true interest cost.

## **Fires**

City staff are engaged with county, state, and federal agencies on the clean-up and recovery of the Santiam Canyon. Our interest is in protecting the City's water supply. A state/federal erosion control assessment team is being created to evaluate immediate and long-term erosion threats. The North Santiam Watershed Council has requested assistance from the City for immediate erosion control. A grant agreement to provide \$50,000 to the North Santiam Watershed Council will be on an upcoming Council agenda.

The EPA is coming into the canyon to manage household hazardous waste clean-up. The work is expected to start within two to three weeks. Damage assessment is beginning. The expected

timeframe for debris and ash removal is months; the timeframe for recovery, per federal definitions, is 18 months to two years.

The state's go-to source for information is <https://wildfire.oregon.gov/cleanup>

A small benefit to the City is FEMA renting space at the Salem Convention Center to support its Oregon operations.

The West remains in fire season. Marion County is sending a task force to the ZOE fire near Redding California. We will be sending one of our Captains as the Task Force Leader but no additional personnel or resources. A mutual aid agreement will be on the City Council October 12 agenda.

### ***Housing and Shelter***

Staff are working on options to relieve pressure on the two camping areas, Wallace Marine Park and Cascades Gateway, and to increase warming center capacity. COVID will continue, and current sheltering needs to be expanded. Staff will have an update for council soon.

### ***Police***

For the community policing performance audit, there will be a public web page of information, including steering committee agendas and materials.

### ***Public Works***

The Public Works Department has been accredited by the American Public Works Association. Only 160 public works departments in the country have been accredited. The process helped the department recognize where it excels and where more work is needed. The department's strategic plan, recently shared with council, is one outcome of the accreditation process. Public Works joins Police and Building and Safety (building codes) as nationally accredited operations.

Thanks for reading,  
Steve