

City of Creswell City Council Work Session Meeting

Council Members Present:

- Mayor Smith
- Councilor Costilla, Council President
- Councilor Dukes
- Councilor Holt
- Councilor Kent
- Councilor Kremer
- Councilor Morris

Audience Present: 8

Press Present: 0

Staff Present:

- City Manager Vincent Martorello
- Public Works Director Cliff Bellew
- Airport Manager Shelley Humble
- Finance Director Jim Piper
- City Planner Curtis Thomas
- Utility Clerk Wendy Bair

Open Meeting

Mayor Smith opened the April 27, 2026, City Council Work Session at 6:00 PM. Mayor Smith asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Committee Reports

A. Public Safety Committee

Councilor Kremer reported that the committee unanimously voted Councilor Kent as secretary. Meeting minutes from the previous session were unavailable due to an old email address issue and will be recreated and ratified. The committee recommended a 6 percent increase to the public safety fee, resulting in an increase of \$1.20 per month to residents. Councilor Kremer clarified that

the fee covers the Lane County Sheriff's contract, which includes deputies, a sergeant, dispatch, and records, with a provision for overtime.

Finance Director Jim Piper provided additional context, noting that the annual contract came in at nearly a 12 percent increase overall, and that because the contract is split equally between the public safety fee and property tax revenues, only half of the contract increase was recommended to be passed through to the fee — covering costs without adding margin.

Councilor Kremer also announced that National Night Out is scheduled for Tuesday, August 4, from approximately 5:00 to 7:00 PM. He noted he was asking that Fourth Street between Oregon and Main will be closed for the event. Activities under consideration include the return of the dunk tank and, in place of the prior pie contest, a donut-eating contest.

B. Parks and Tree Advisory Board

Councilor Morris reported that the most recent Parks and Tree Advisory Board meeting was primarily focused on planning for the Arbor Day celebration, which took place the prior day and was deemed a success. Native trees — including Grand Firs and Willamette Valley-bred Ponderosa Pine — as well as a variety of nursery plants were distributed to residents. The next meeting is scheduled for May 12. Mayor Nicholas Smith took a moment to recognize Public Works staff, particularly the crew for the excellent condition of the park. Councilor Morris mentioned how great Jayden was.

C. Airport Commission

Council President was unable to attend the work session and passed it over to Airport Manager Shelley Humble to deliver the commission's report. The April 15 meeting included a work session to finalize minor revisions to the airport's rules and regulations, which will be brought before the Council for approval. City Manager Vincent Martorello suggested scheduling a work session to walk the Council through the changes prior to a vote, and Mayor Nicholas Smith concurred.

Airport Manager Humble provided updates on several ongoing grant projects, noting that the Hand Base station grant is nearly closed, with the final radio equipment on order. Volunteer staff from the Oregon Resiliency Team are scheduled to assemble the equipment in advance of the ODART (Oregon Disaster Airlift Response Team) disaster exercise on June 13–14, which will use the airport as a food distribution hub in a simulated Cascadia Subduction Zone event. The Council was invited to volunteer.

The north taxi lane project is expected to break ground within 60 days, with the goal of completing construction prior to the National STOL (Short Takeoff and Landing) competition. The EPUD electrical project is nearly complete. Airport Manager Humble also reported on the STEM aviation partnership with Creswell School District, noting that the district is exploring how to allow students to earn a private pilot license alongside their diploma, and that the new STEM building will include an aircraft maintenance component. Young Eagle rides are planned for July 4, starting at 9:00 AM, with a goal of surpassing last year's 75 rides. The National STOL competition is confirmed for August 28–29, with 16 contestants already registered and an anticipated total of 35–50 participants from multiple states, including five local pilots as of now.

D. LaneAct (Lane Area Commission on Transportation)

Councilor Kent reported that he was unable to attend the most recent LaneAct meeting but shared a related update: Lane County has received transportation funding through its transportation plan and reached out to the City regarding a letter of interest to participate in projects that could include safe school routes, speed signs, and traffic calming measures. City Manager Vincent Martorello confirmed no additional action was needed beyond what was noted. The Council briefly acknowledged that prior Safe Routes to School work had already produced results, including a completed crosswalk improvement.

E. Administration and Finance Committee

The committee's brief report touched on the scheduling of municipal court dates. Discussion clarified that, given the impending transition to a new municipal judge — with the current judge departing in August — the committee recommended forgoing further formal evaluations of the outgoing judge and instead focusing efforts on the new judge and an updated review structure. City Manager Vincent Martorello noted that the process would mirror the recently revised city attorney review framework, incorporating quarterly check-ins with the judge. The Council agreed to schedule a work session to finalize the new charge for the municipal judge position.

Discussion Items

A. Creswell First! – Joe Walters

Joe Walters presented the annual report on behalf of Creswell First!, the City's community giving organization. Of the \$22,000 allocated by the City for the year, all but \$300 was distributed. Recipients included:

- Family Relief Nursery – preventive family education and support
- Intergenerational Reading Collaboration – \$2,000 to restock a book vending machine at the grade school
- Hope and Safety Alliance (formerly Women's Space) – \$3,000 for domestic abuse services used within Creswell
- Community Food for Creswell – \$3,000 to support the local food bank
- Creswell Clubhouse – support for an after-school K–12 program
- Family Resource Center – operated by the Creswell School District to connect families to essential resources
- Caring for Creswell Kids – \$2,000 for clothing and shoes for K–12 students, used specifically for shoes
- Community Sharing – \$3,000 to assist Creswell residents with utility bill payments

Joe Walters also noted that Creswell First! conducts independent fundraising throughout the year to support additional programs, including the local eye center and public library. Councilor Kent expressed interest in making the donation process more accessible online, and it was acknowledged that a website revamp is in progress. Mayor Smith asked is Creswell! First separate from Creswell Clubhouse? Joe Walters Stated it was Different. Debbie Yee asked if all recipients were nonprofit 501(C)(3) designees, it was clarified that Creswell First! operates as an umbrella giving

organization and is a 501(c)(3), though not all recipient organizations hold that designation. The organization performs due diligence on each recipient's charitable status and accountability.

B. South Lane County Fire and Rescue District Levy Presentation – Chief Wooten

Fire Chief Wooten appeared before the Council with Deputy Chief Justin Baird and Senior Division Chief Aaron Smith to present the district's May 19 levy measure, which requests an increase in the permanent tax rate from \$0.47 to \$1.335 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This is the first such request since the levy's original passage in 2012.

Chief Wooten highlighted an operational crisis with a 62 percent increase in call volume since 2012, rising from approximately 9 to 15 or more calls per day. Despite increased demand, the district operates with only 5 people on duty district-wide, with just 2 stationed at Creswell at any time. Consequently, when an ambulance call occurs, those 2 personnel may leave for up to 2 hours, leaving the station unstaffed for fire response, which currently occurs around 19.2 hours per day. The district also faces a shortage of 3 from a budget of 7 positions due to resignations attributed to burnout from high workloads.

Adding to the challenges are a decline in volunteerism, making it unfeasible to rely on volunteers for high call volumes. Extensive training and time commitments deter potential volunteers, compounding pressure on limited full-time staff. Chief Wooten detailed the consequences if the levy fails, including alternating staffing between an engine in Cottage Grove and an ambulance in Creswell, significantly increasing response times. He cautioned that this could worsen the district's ISO Class 2 rating, leading to higher homeowner insurance premiums.

Wooten linked the rise in ambulance demand to factors like an aging population, corporate clinic consolidations, and reliance on EMS for primary care by Oregon Health Plan recipients. He noted hospital offload times of up to 3 hours contribute to the issue. To reduce call volumes, the district contracted a subcontractor for interfacility hospital transfers, incurring about \$2 million in annual foregone billable revenue. If the levy is approved, Creswell staffing will increase to 4 personnel, allowing independent fire engine and ambulance staffing, restoring 24-hour fire coverage.

Chief Wooten referenced two fire incidents. First, the fatal Cottage Grove fire underlined the strain on resources. With 5 personnel responding, they managed to contain the fire, preventing it from worsening and avoiding further fatalities. Second, the Creswell shop fire required a response involving splitting crews, with 2 personnel arriving to assess and control the situation before additional assistance arrived. This approach ensured the family residence was preserved despite the initial intensity.

Addressing Councilor Holt's concern about a proposed unhoused village strain on resources, Wooten stated he would only endorse such models if mandatory treatment was involved. This came after the Cottage Grove encampment resulted in an additional 4 calls per day. The district lacks resources to absorb such demands at current staffing levels.

The Council considered supporting the levy campaign through City website postings and newsletter content referencing open houses. Individual councilors discussed displaying yard signs for outreach. City Manager Martorello confirmed that open house events could be promoted via City communication channels.

C. Floodplain Update – Leni Crow

Floodplain Manager Leni Crow provided an update on the status of the new FEMA flood risk maps and the Community Rating System (CRS).

Floodplain Manager Leni Crow reported that the appeal period for the new preliminary flood maps has closed, with approximately 65 appeals submitted by Creswell residents. However, with FEMA currently operating under a shutdown, direct communication has been limited, and the outcome of the appeals remains uncertain. Floodplain Manager Leni Crow confirmed she was able to briefly reach the FEMA project manager but received no indication of whether appeals would be successful. The next formal step will be a Letter of Final Determination, after which the City will have 6 months to adopt the new maps.

On the Community Rating System (CRS) — a program through which communities with higher floodplain management standards can earn discounts on residents' flood insurance premiums — She noted that while FEMA has paused the acceptance of new communities into the program due to the shutdown and non-renewal of administrative contracts, Creswell is well-positioned to apply when the program reopens. The City's existing code already meets or exceeds many CRS standards, and Floodplain Manager Leni Crow estimated the City could potentially qualify for a 15 to 20 percent discount once enrollment is available. She emphasized that preparation work is ongoing so that the City can enter the program at the highest eligible class.

Crow also noted that many residents who submitted elevation certificates during the appeal process are in strong positions to pursue individual map amendments (LOMAs) removing their properties from the Special Flood Hazard Area. She offered to assist those residents through that process.

Regarding the pre-implementation compliance measures tied to ESA (Endangered Species Act) requirements — specifically the "no net loss" and compensatory storage provisions — Crow reported that she and City Planner Curtis are collaborating with University of Oregon students on a statewide pilot program to develop an off-site mitigation framework, with a draft expected around September.

The City is also partnering with a company called Forerunner to provide a public-facing web tool where residents can type in their address to view both their current and proposed floodplain status, including any elevation certificate data on file. This tool will be linked from the City's website.

Councilor Holt and others noted the financial burden the new maps would place on residents, including those not directly in the floodplain, as insurance rates are assessed on a community-wide basis. Debbie Yee raised the point that Cottage Grove holds a 20 percent CRS discount while Creswell does not and emphasized there is no guarantee the City will obtain that status. Crow

acknowledged that reality while reaffirming her commitment to setting the City up for success. Thomas Yee raised concerns about enforcement implications for manufactured home parks and RV spaces within newly designated flood zones, and Crow confirmed that code enforcement is complaint-based, and that the focus will be on resident education and finding workable solutions rather than punitive enforcement.

Floodplain Manager Leni Crow announced she will be attending the National Floodplain Conference at the end of May and will prepare a summary of insights and ideas upon her return.

D. Family Oriented Everyone Village Check in

City Manager Vincent Martorello briefly introduced the item, presenting the Council with two options: continue exploration of the Family Oriented Everyone Village initiative and schedule a June work session, or discontinue the effort at this time.

Mayor Nicholas Smith opened discussion by delivering a prepared statement, noting that after allowing time for community input, he had reached a firm conclusion. He stated he does not support the Everyone Village model for Creswell, citing the clear opposition heard from the majority of the community. Mayor Nicholas Smith proposed an alternative: a year-round "Giving Tree" initiative that would leverage the City's Tree City USA designation, partnering with Creswell School District Family Resource Services and Creswell First! to create an anonymous platform where residents could anonymously select and fulfill specific needs for Creswell families — such as clothing, utility payments, transportation assistance, and employment connections.

Council President Costilla stated he had heard no community support for the project and, given the City's recent experience with homelessness-related legislation, was not prepared to move forward. He chose option two — discontinuation.

Councilor Morris expressed mixed feelings, acknowledging the genuine housing need and the human dimension of the affected families, but ultimately concluded that the potential for unintended consequences — including the risk of serving residents from outside the community — led her to a no position as well.

Councilor Holt was unequivocal in her opposition, stating she had been a "no" throughout. She raised concerns about the strain on community resources, the absence of local social services to support a village population, the ongoing financial pressures already facing Creswell residents, and specific policy concerns about the model's allowance for off-site substance use. She requested that the discussion be discontinued.

Councilor Dukes expressed concern that the model lacked a sunset provision or pathway to self-sufficiency, stating that effective support systems should help people get back on their feet and become independent — not provide indefinite housing.

Councilor Kent stated he had been drawn to the idea of limiting eligibility to families registered with the school district, but after hearing Fire Chief Wooten's presentation on the impacts of the Cottage Grove encampment, he was persuaded that unintended consequences could not be adequately mitigated. He voted no.

Councilor Kremer added that, given the fire district's resource constraints, the Lane County Sheriff's staffing challenges, and the potential for the site to be within a floodplain, the financial and operational risks to the City were too significant. He echoed support for the Mayor's Giving Tree concept as a constructive alternative.

Debbie Yee offered public comment encouraging the Council to explore community-based giving and volunteerism as an alternative path to supporting vulnerable Creswell families, noting that many residents may not be aware of the depth of local need.

City Manager Vincent Martorello briefly clarified that the initiative was intended for families only not the general unhoused population and noted that at least one of the families had since secured housing independently. The Council took note but affirmed its consensus position.

The Council reached a unanimous consensus to discontinue exploration of the Family Oriented Everyone Village initiative, with Mayor Nicholas Smith noting that the conversation about how to better support Creswell families through community-based alternatives would continue.

Adjournment

With no further business Mayor Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

*Signature on File

Alonzo Costilla, Council President

Attest:

*Signature on File

Caitlin Born, City Recorder