

**Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations  
February 13, 2024 – Remotely Held (Zoom)  
Meeting Minutes**

NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES	NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES
Centennial		North Central	
Central City	INACTIVE	Northeast	INACTIVE
Gresham Butte	Stephen Estes, Jim Buck, Theresa Tschirky	North Gresham	INACTIVE
Gresham Pleasant Valley	Richard Barker, John Maxwell	Northwest	Kat Todd, John Bildsoe
Historic Southeast	INACTIVE	Powell Valley	
Hogan Cedars		Rockwood	Catherine Nicewood, Deanna Stewart
Hollybrook		Southwest	Kathy Gardenhire
Kelly Creek	Charles Teem, Karin Zachow, Carol Rulla	Wilkes-East	
Staff & Guests	Mayor Travis Stovall, City of Gresham; Interim City Manager Eric Schmidt, City of Gresham; Alex Logue, Community Engagement, City of Gresham; April Avery; Sue Holwege; Antoinette King; Thomas Stanley; Janet Unruh; Sahara Miller		

The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m., Carol Rulla, Coalition Co-President presiding.

1. Minutes for December 12, 2023, meeting: Approved as presented.
2. Proposed Public Safety Levy, Mayor Travis Stovall:
  - a. The previous levy in May of 2023 failed by just 2 percentage points. Some focus groups were used to figure out why that levy failed. Some of the feedback included that voters thought the cost of \$1.50 per 1000 was too high and clarity was needed concerning the \$15.00 Police, Fire and Parks fee. The focus of the new levy is still police, fire and homeless services.
  - b. Responses to questions submitted pre-meeting:
    - 1) What are the primary reasons for Gresham’s general fund budget gap? Measure 5 and Measure 50 limited the city’s ability to raise revenue. Revenues from assessed market value for property taxes are capped at 3% growth per year. Expenses for supplies, benefits and wages generally tend to increase about 6% annually. Comparing Gresham to other cities on the national level, we are substantially lower in things like number of police and firefighters per 1000 residents and number of developed acres for parks, including funding for parks programs, etc. Gresham’s general fund is about \$92 million with around 115,000 residents compared to Hillsboro’s general fund which is about \$164 million with around 107,000 residents. Another comparison is that Gresham spends about \$5 million on parks—Hillsboro spends about \$25 million on parks.

2) Why did last year's \$8 million budget gap increase to \$19 million? Ultimately, the longer we don't have the levy in place, the wider the gap becomes. Last year we used the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to cover some of the gap. Those funds will not be available after this year.

3) What is the effect of overtime on the general fund budget? Overtime could be significant. In fiscal year 2022-2023, overtime accounted for \$4.7 million of actual expenses. Some of the challenges we have is that we are unable to hire a full-time employee and the gap in services is filled by the use of overtime. We are currently looking at ways to reduce overtime expenditures.

4) What percentage of the general fund budget is administration? 91% of our general fund budget is spent on police, fire and emergency services; 2% is spent on economic development; 2% is spent on community livability; and 5% is spent on parks. Costs for support services (HR, IT, etc.) are called transfer costs. These transfer costs amount to 17% of the general fund.

5) Will new growth in Gresham, both residential and commercial, help increase revenues or is that revenue offset by the need for additional city services? For every \$10 million in new tax assessed values, the city gets about \$34,000 in new tax revenue. To hire one new police officer or firefighter, the city would need \$50 million in new tax assessed values. Tax assessed values are significantly less than market values.

6) Where does the levy place Gresham compared to other suburbs of Portland in terms of the taxes for the city of Gresham? The total tax for Gresham, with the levy will be \$4.96 per thousand. Currently our tax rate is \$3.61 per thousand which is near the bottom of all the metro area cities. Fairview has a tax rate of \$3.49. The city of Portland is at \$7.59. The city of Albany is at \$6.40. Hillsboro is at \$3.67 but they also have an additional \$1.72 levy.

7) What is Gresham's current general fund per resident compared to other jurisdictions? Our general fund per resident is \$830 per resident compared to \$1531 per resident for Hillsboro. Troutdale is about \$1300 per resident. Sandy is about \$1400 per resident.

8) What does the \$15 fee for police, fire and parks cover and how will the levy impact this fee? 95% of the fee is spent on police and fire and 5% is spent on parks. This money is part of the general fund. Property taxes in Gresham cover about 44% of our police and fire. Without the police, fire and parks fee, we would have had to cut our police and fire.

9) How many currently funded position vacancies are there in police, fire and other services covered by the general fund? Currently there are 18 funded positions in police, 1 in fire, 1 in parks and 1 in code. We have been talking about the "silver tsunami" for some time and we are starting to see it now. Many of our loyal employees

are retiring. This is something that we are seeing more of and we are working on trying to address.

10) Is the city having trouble recruiting to fill police and fire vacancies? The short answer is yes just because the nature of the marketplace is challenging right now. The police are actively recruiting. We have made some investments in a public safety recruiter and we've brought back some of the police staff to help with the background checks. 3 or 4 police officers that left during the pandemic have now returned to the city of Gresham.

11) Are any funded police vacancies not being filled for reasons other than lack of applicants? No, not at this time.

12) How many new positions will the new levy support and what departments will the new employees be assigned? The levy will support 44 new positions—29 are new and 15 are currently funded by one-time monies. The levy will ensure those 15 positions will become permanent. What departments will they be assigned: 10 positions will be professional police department staff, 7 will be sworn police officers, 11 ARPA-funded police positions, 10 fire positions, 4 ARPA-funded firefighters and 2 homeless services positions.

13) How will the levy improve emergency response time? First and foremost, response time will improve just because we have more police and fire staff. Having more staff available for the mental health response will reduce the tasks for our police officers. The Community Safety Specialist can take on many of the non-emergency calls. Adding a fire rescue unit to our busiest fire station will allow a smaller unit to respond to some of the calls that don't require a full fire response apparatus and team. 80-90% of the calls that are responded to by homeless services used to go to the police. Focusing on the right response for the situation often gives us a better and less expensive solution.

14) How will the levy help address gun violence? Being able to deal with some of the root causes of gun violence with programs such as our youth engagement program. Having a greater police and community safety presence will help deter some of the violence as well as being more proactive in prevention.

15) Will the levy support traffic enforcement which seems to be non-existent currently? If the levy passes, yes.

16) Will the levy support any recreation or additional park services? This levy is specifically to help shore up our emergency services and response teams.

17) What is the difference in the new \$1.35 levy compared to the \$1.52 levy? We won't be able to make some of the investments that would achieve the levels of good for our community. We had to cut some new staff positions projected by the previous levy such as the fire department's mobile integrated health unit. This unit

would have required a paramedic and EMT rather than 4 firefighters and 2 deputy firefighters. It would have provided a way to reduce medical calls, both present and future, by allowing some of those lower acuity medical calls to be handled on site rather than always having to transport those individuals to the emergency room. Other positions cut from the previous levy: 2 sworn police officers, one community safety specialist and one records staff from the previous levy. It wasn't that we didn't need those positions, we just could not afford them.

18) Will the city collect revenue another way to cover the reduced levy amount and, if so, how? We are continuing to look at grant funding. We are working at the Federal and state level to try and find additional funding solutions. We do this all the time. The state funds our youth engagement program. We get funding for our homeless services from Multnomah County.

19). What is the plan to reach a sustainable level of funding after the inflow from the levy runs out? The levy lasts for 5 years. There is the ability to re-pass the levy after 5 years (as an example, Hillsboro has passed their safety levy 5 times). We can't predict 5 years from now. Will there be different solutions? These are all being investigated and reviewed. There are other opportunities that are being worked on at various levels, such as some type of tax reform.

20) What is the plan for capital need such as improving fire stations? The May 2024 levy is really focused on operations. General obligation bonds are the solution for big capital needs.

21) What would be cut if the levy fails—how many existing positions, filled or unfilled? We are currently working on a plan B for what would happen if the levy fails. It is difficult to predict what the council is going to decide. Staff is working on potential recommendations for cuts. If the levy does not pass cuts will include police and fire positions.

22) Many cities have public swimming pools, even small cities like Canby. Why can't Gresham afford a city recreation facility? Recreational facilities can easily run \$50-\$60 million. It would be a tough sell to spend this amount of money on a recreational facility when our fire stations probably need that amount and then some.

c. Other questions:

1) Is the \$15 fee on our utility bill for police, fire and parks going away if the levy passes? Council has not made a final decision but indications are that the \$15 fee will stay.

2) Is the portion of the budget going to police and fire (91%) typical for most cities? No. Typical for most cities the percentage is more like 45-50%

3. Coalition Elections: Nomination to maintain the existing slate of officers (Carol Rulla and Jim Buck, Co-Presidents; John Bildsoe, Vice President; and Dana Duval, Secretary-Treasurer) was made by Theresa Tschirky and seconded by Kathy Gardenhire. Re-election of Board approved unanimously.

4. Neighborhood and City News and Reports:

a. Neighborhood Services Report: Alex Logue provided an introduction and a short overview since the Community Engagement Office is now overseeing the Neighborhood Services Department. The position previously held by Michael Gonzalez is being held vacant for the time being. Lina Sizmin will step into a more prominent role with neighborhood associations. Green and Clean will be April 20.

b. Co-President Report:

1) Carol Rulla:

(a) The appeal for a Pleasant Valley development was deemed late because the city staff gave out the wrong date that the appeal was due. Pleasant Valley NA was unaware of the decision that the appeal was late. The code language is that an appeal must be filed in 12 calendar days.

(b) Rockwood has a development in their neighborhood. Janet Unruh: There is a developer that wants to put about 20 townhomes on 1.22 acres. This area is also on a dead-end street and the developer wants to make it a through street. There is a petition to oppose the development and they are currently looking for funding to buy the property.

c. NA Reports and Concerns.

1) Gresham Butte NA: The GBNA will have a meeting on March 13th at the Kyoudou Center. The speaker will be Dr. Lalo Guerrero from the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries. The subject is geologic hazards in our area and the Cascadia subduction zone.

2) Pleasant Valley NA: Their NA is frustrated with the city planning staff on the plan update for the Pleasant Valley Plan. They did not engage the residents in the area in the process. Just wanted to let the other NA's know that this was happening. After discussion on this issue, Jim Buck suggested that we try to have someone from the city to discuss the issue at our next coalition meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dana Duval – Coalition Secretary-Treasurer

Next meeting: <b>Tuesday, March 12th</b>
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