



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES September 23, 2025

The scheduled meeting of the Ontario City Council was called to order by Mayor Deborah Folden at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Council members present were Deborah Folden, Ken Hart, Susann Mills, Michael Braden, Penny Bakefelt, and Adrianna Contreras. John Kirby arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Staff present were Dan Cummings, Corinna Hysell, Laura Reyes, Clint Benson, Tatiana Burgess, Karit Ott, Jason Cooper, Al Haun, and Marshall Pierce.

AGENDA

This Agenda was posted Friday, September 19, 2025. Copies of the Agenda are available from the City Hall Customer Service Counter and on the city's website www.ontariooregon.org.

HART moved, MILLS seconded, **TO ADOPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED**. Roll call vote: Mills-yes; Braden-yes; Hart-yes; Contreras-yes; Kirby-out; Bakefelt-yes; Folden-yes. Motion carried 6/0/1.

CONSENT AGENDA

BAKEFELT moved, HART seconded, **TO ADOPT THE CONSENT AGENDA, WHICH CONSISTED OF ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2025**. Roll call vote: Mills-yes; Braden-yes; Hart-yes; Contreras-yes; Kirby-out; Bakefelt-yes; Folden-yes. Motion carried 6/0/1.

Councilor Kirby arrived at 6:10 p.m.

PRESENTATION

Downtown Christmas Lights

McShane Erlebach, Ontario, stated: *I'm just representing downtown businesses that like four others here. It's not necessarily just about downtown Christmas lights. We're actually wanting to do a light up clean up Ontario project in the downtown, just due to the condition of the city streets, the sidewalks, and making it a safe place to bring your family. So, our clean up project is actually we've been meeting with local businesses, so we're gonna start taking on walks and start cleaning it business by business. And that's just kind of a step, or a phase one. We'd also like to add lights, like more Christmas lights, just to make it more of a destination type area, make it more friendly, make it lighter, brighter. Seems to take the unsavory people away when you do have better and nice things in your community. So here are some of the things, like 15% of consumer say they avoid businesses entirely due to outward appearances. So that's what our little committee is trying to do. We're trying to improve the outward look of our downtown. If you guys go down there, you can tell the difference between say like a new poured sidewalk on the corner versus the old ones. So that's also part of why we're up here, so we'd like to see if we could get or if the city would have some funding to help us business owners pressure wash the sidewalks. That'd be one of our steps. A second thing would be to see the street sweeper actually sweep the streets, maybe more consistently. It's extremely unpleasant. Broken glass, bottles, anything is on the sidewalks and on the curb and gutter right now. And I don't think they've been cleaned in months. I don't even, if they've been cleaned this year, right? So, that's kind of, that's where we're going, so we have community members that donated any kind of lights we want, so it wouldn't be a cost to the city. I've talked to Idaho Power, Idaho Power said to actually come and bring this as a presentation. They will allow us, under you guy's agreement, to put lights on their poles. We just have to have a presentation to it, and then there's a conversation that goes, you know, community member, City Council, and it moves forward, then it goes to a meeting with Idaho Power, just to make sure that things are safe. Liability wise, would be the next question. The city is already having liability with those 50 pound pots that are sitting up there currently, on brackets*



that the city hung up with straps that the city hung up, and using outlets that are on the poles. So, the electricity load shouldn't change with LEDs and the nice high efficiency things that are out there on the market today. They're a lot better than anything that's involved. So, that's kind of what we're proposing, the city is to think about allowing us community members, business owners, to make the downtown great. We're looking for a partnership in the city, so community members want to partner with our city to help us to improve the downtown, to bring in businesses, and to just make the community a better place, right? So, if we can get the downtown looking good, Moore Park looking better, and then bring in more outside community members, Payette, Fruitland, the Treasure Valley, come in, that's what we're aiming for. So, you know, if you guys would like to partner with us, we'd like to see if we can come up with some funding maybe, to, again, pressure wash the sidewalks so we can get the gum, the oil, everything off of that, making it look nice. Again, it's just the downtown and the perception of it, is, I guess, not beneficial to the outlook of the city, of what, I believe, the community is looking for at the city, compared to Caldwell, Nampa, Meridian, Boise, or even Fruitland, looks a lot better than Ontario. And you can keep going, you know what I mean? We can go New Plymouth, Middleton, I mean, all these little towns are trying to make their community the heart of their community into something that everybody wants to come to with business. So, do you guys want, again, I'm not sure how you make the next step of a proposal to you guys to find some money to help support our downtown. If we can come together to hang lights, again, as community members. I think a good discussion is in order, and so hopefully you guys can, you know, come up with a way that we can move forward one more step. Again, the lights are free. So the city is not paying for them, they've been donated.

Mayor Folden verified he had said there were 10,000 lights donated? That's a lot.

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, and we can, they will donate what we need, so, again, the lights are free. We're just going step by step. So we got a donation of free Christmas lights, for lights to put up downtown, and now we're looking on how we can do it, what it could look like, and what the process is. So I know currently you guys don't have a process for that. I went to the downtown, or the downstairs area, and there's no permits or anything of that nature online right now, currently, so it's just another step in the road. You guys...*

Councilor Bakefelt asked if he had a budget of what he's thinking they'd need?

Mr. Erlebach: *For like pressure washing? I think that we did get, we're having a couple of bids, in a sense.*

Comment: *We have someone working on a bid. We're supposed to be getting an answer for that in early October.*

Mr. Erlebach: *So we are looking for a better price with bulk, so we already met with one gentleman, I think I got ahold of another guy, and I'm waiting back on him. So, if we could get a bulk deal, they'll give us a bulk discount. Are hardest, or the biggest detour right now is access to water, actually. So the people that will do this have to go business to business, make sure if they do it, that they don't damage any of the building or property, flood basements, things like that, so they have to go business to business, walk around it, make sure nothing can be damaged or hurt, and then, you know, they can say how many businesses want to participate. And that's kind of where we're at. About half of them want to, and the other half haven't really gotten back just 'cuz we're waiting on how much it costs. So, I know, I think I asked the guy how much it costs for from my place and that's 50 feet, and he was going to do \$200, which would be like a chemical spray so it'd make it almost new looking, and then it actually, he'd spray our front of our buildings to help, in a sense, buyers might want to be attracted to them. We're trying to get the budget worked out and see how much it costs for something like that. I know on the Christmas light thing, again, we got the lights, the only real setback, again, is having a conversation, open conversation with the city. As per your guys' agreement with Idaho Power, the city has to install them. That's just kind of black and white. Again, I talked to Idaho Power several times now, and he says yes, it is possible, and they actually told me to make a proposal to you guys, so that's kind of his, or Idaho Power's, step as well, a proposal and then go from there.*

Mayor Folden stated she loved the idea of cleaning up downtown.

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, we're trying to, you know, we know it's a, you know, one little portion of the whole city, so if the community members, business owners, can help with that, as well as partner with the city itself, then we can make it actually happen.*

Mayor Folden stated with the lights, what about Moore Park, lighting it up, if we could do something like that. Could they get sponsors?

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, and again, we could, like I said, we have somebody that will provide lights currently, for free, and it's kind of their business. They just want to make a social media, you know, type video, and that helps them out by advertising their services, and it helps us out. So we can do multiple ways, again, we just need a conversation with somebody that wants to listen, wants to participate.*

Comment: *We all, we all, I'm sure we all have something to say, I mean we're all, do you want me to go up there?*

Mayor Folden stated yes, absolutely.

Mr. Erlebach: *Again, I don't know how you get to getting a street sweeper downtown, or how that process is, but that would also be very nice. That's another thing we'd like to discuss.*

Councilor Bakefelt stated she thought they should put together a plan, on paper, on what their vision is, along with a budget. That would help.

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, it'll help you guys out, but again, the first step is to bring it up to you guys, figure out what we can do, what you guys want to see, what we want to see, get our visions aligned, and then go from there. Maybe in our budget for, we're really just getting the lights free, so it's just installation, you know, again, we can work around, I don't know how we could work around that. I could probably, somebody donate a bucket truck that we could use if the city didn't have one, so, you know, we can always find community members that want to help, 'cuz obviously it's, anything's better than current, right? So, another business.*

Comment [later in comment identified as owner of Aubree's]: *Yeah, these are all business owners from Ontario. I don't know if you guys recognize all the people that are here, but this is what's happening. We're all coming together as a group, and we are trying to make a difference downtown because downtown, for a very long time, has been known for being dirty. I have shopped there since I was a kid, like I have, I'm like one of the OG members of Care-O-Sell. Like I got one of those really low numbers because I've been shopping at Care-O-Sell forever. I've been shopping at all, like Vintage Rose, all those businesses that have been there, Jolts-n-Juice, I've been going there. And you know what? There was a time I feel like it was a little bit cleaner, but now, it's just, it's so dirty, so many people, I've had a business, I'm Aubree's in case you guys didn't know. Aubree's is located across from Tacos Mi Ranchito, and since I have been there, God, it's been really hard to get anything done. You guys have seen me before, but just to get, I feel like this is the move that we're waiting for, this is all business owners that are from downtown Ontario, and whatever we gotta do, or lead us in the right direction, to make sure that these things do happen. I've been trying to pressure wash my business forever. I own a pressure washer. I have zero access to water. I have a little sink in the back, and man, I get my bucket, I go out there, and I try to wash the dogshit off of my front that just gets left and smashed all the time. I take pride in my business. My business is really pretty. If you've ever been in, I mean, I work really hard and I take pride. I am a local, I grew up here, I want to make Ontario better. This is how I'm giving back, so, I'm winging it right now, so hopefully this is okay, but, I mean, we have newer businesses downtown that really care and really want to make a difference. I mean, Sugar Mama's, she's moved downtown just because she grew up here and she wants to be a part of it and wants it to be special and wants it to be beautiful, and I think that there's enough business owners that care if we can all work together and we're all on the same team, if you guys can help us, we want the pressure washer. These lights? What a beautiful, amazing idea that these people have given us and that they're going to go ahead and do it for free, 'cuz we don't really have all the money. We're putting the money into our business and trying to make them look as beautiful as possible, and they're going to go ahead and just do this, so if there is anything that we can do to make this happen, because if you're told that oh my gosh, you're going to get something for free, and then we're like oh man, we can't do it, like we gotta make it happen because if we're trying to make a difference here and we just want, you know, anybody*

who's local here...that was the downtown, it's iconic. It's got a lot of iconic stores, and we all have huge followings in this community and we're trying to grow and we're trying to make our downtown beautiful.

Councilor Kirby asked if she had any relationship with Revitalize Ontario?

Aubree's Shop: We have had, I used to go to all the meetings back in the day. We always, for some reason, we would try and get things done on the downtown, but I feel like focus's would be other places than the downtown. That was always my experience going to the meetings, that they were trying to work on the tower, and get lights on the tower was such a big deal. I mean, I stopped going to those meetings because I have three kids. I was very pregnant at the last meeting, and I was like, I can't do this anymore, I can't go to both meetings, but I really feel like that there's just, there was like a separation between the two, and I know that there are people from the downtown that have tried to go to those meetings.

Councilor Kirby stated his understanding of Revitalize, that was a downtown group.

Aubree's Shop: Well, that's what we thought, too, so every time at the meetings that would always be the joke, but I mean, I think that there's just been some butting heads over the years, and, I mean, like I said, I'm always saying well we're all on the same team, but I think that their ideas are working on other things and the downtown just isn't the main focus. And I know that back in the day when there was those grants to do the store fronts and stuff like that, it was a focus, but I think that the focus got shifted. I don't know if it had to do with the leadership that was involved. That was just my experience of going to the meetings that I felt like that they did not really care about the downtown and it was just, it was weird that we couldn't work together for some reason.

Ashton Chapman [ProSoul Games]: *Did you have, want to have a question first? Okay, My name is Ashton Chapman. I live in Caldwell, but I do have a business down here in downtown Ontario, ProSoul Games. Very happy to be here. Came here to Ontario because I saw a need, and I wanted to bring it to a community that needed it. Mr. Kirby, I'd like to address that. I, with Revitazlie, their focus did start as a downtown project, and then the longer they've existed, the more they have considered themselves an all Ontario project, or at least that's what they have expressed to me. Also, with that, have we worked with that? Yes and no. I will be honest. There has been a lot of infighting and a lot of causticness from downtown businesses in the past decade, and Revitalize got tired of it, and I don't blame them. It was exhausting. A lot of that infighting is subsiding, and a lot of the causticness, I am putting my best effort into putting a foot to it and I'm addressing the causticness where the causticness is. I have no control, but I have my piece to say, and I'm trying to encourage people to be calmer, politer, and less caustic. And I think that also has happened here. I think that there's been a lot of causticness brought to the Council. That sucked. We are not those people, okay? I'm the oldest business sitting here. Ashley, at Aubree's, is the second oldest business sitting here, and everybody else is younger, and we don't want what the previous regime had. We want to be involved in putting forth our efforts. We're not asking entirely for you all to be our effort. We're asking for us to be a portionate effort, and for you guys to help us on the other side that we can't help. So, for example, the issue with the lights. Lights are free. Power...what's the budget? The budget is hanging the lights, and I don't know that McShane can give you that budget, because McShane doesn't have the cost of your man hours, so the budget really is what's the truck, what's the power, the people putting it up, and then the removal, and I don't mind being involved in discussing that, and assessing it, not my area of expertise. I do also know, I want to comment, like we're bringing six things to you at once because we're excited, okay? We're excited. We want newness for our, what's going to make our business grow, and we believe what's going to make our business grow is going to help the city overall. Street sweepers....I don't know what's going on with them. I have not seen a street sweeper in the seven years that I've been there. That's not to say it isn't there. It's saying I haven't seen it. And we are constantly, constantly fighting litter in our downtown area. Well, we're going to fight that, okay? As McShane mentioned, we are uniting and we are going to put together a cleaning effort. I was last asked by Connie, I don't know if that's useful, but Connie and I last discussed it and I said I would like to take a front on designing how that unity is going to work and we as the businesses are going to break up that responsibility. I am working on that. To me, it's going to look something like each business takes a rotating day and has a report back to a form saying here's what I've done. And then how's the enforcement? There isn't. We're just going to kick each other. Hey, you didn't do your cleanup day, okay? But also on the kicking front, don't tell the cops, if any of them do come*

be mean to you, tell me and we'll handle it. Okay? Sorry that the past is caustic. I want a non-caustic future. I am not going to participate in caustic, so if you don't see me, it's because it's caustic.

Chelsea Skeen [Sugar Mama]: *I just, I mean, I'll just say really quick. I moved to the downtown to add to the downtown, to make it beautiful. I was in my old location for five years. A lot of people said to me, why would you move downtown, it's disgusting, people don't want to go down there. And I want to be part of that change.*

Councilor Hart stated they raised a bunch of great questions. On street sweeping, the Council had held that discussion before, how was the sweeping being done? Was the job not getting done? Was it being done at 1:00 a.m. so no one saw it being done? If it was okay to tow cars to get the street sweeping done, and people didn't get mad about that, then start towing the cars. What was the actual schedule for street sweeping?

Al Haun, Public Works Assistant Project Manager, stated he contacted the street sweeper driver. He generally went in between 3:00-4:00 a.m. to avoid the traffic and cars parked on the streets. Usually, it was once a month that was being swept downtown. If it wasn't being seen, and garbage was accumulating, that was generally being done by those individuals who were downtown. That was just South Oregon Street.

Comment: *There's been glass in front of her business for three weeks now. Broken glass all over the road.*

Comment: *Yeah, there's no way that he's....*

Mr. Haun stated he could only get so close to the curbs with the sweeper, and with the bulb outs, it was very difficult to get there, without getting out of the sweeper with a broom. There were other businesses that had landscaping that was blown out off the sidewalks into the streets, which blew down the street, which impacted the businesses further down the street.

Comment: *So do you think that once a month, though, is good? Like, I mean, shoot, I have to sweep my house every day. It's a disaster. I mean, people out there are constantly littering. Like, do you think that because it's such a high traffic area that, is that, like, is that, am I asking something that's kind of ridiculous to say that can we have two times, every other week, at least, because it is...*

Councilor Hart stated it was just money, and the city did what they were asked to do.

Comment: *Okay, and I'm not trying to be malicious or anything....*

Councilor Hart stated there was a contractor...

Comment: *I don't know if I'm asking dumb questions.*

Councilor Hart stated that was more for Dan. Maybe as Councilor Bakefelt stated previously, those questions in writing to the City Manager, stated some of the things that they'd like them to consider....

Comment: *Okay.*

Councilor Hart continued....and Dan had the authority to say no or yes, or take it back before Council, to see what could be done with Jacobs, under their contract. They were paid to do what they were paid to do. If the decision of the Council was to try to find the money to do the street sweeping once a week, he didn't know if that could be done, but it was just money, right?

Comment: *Even an every other, I mean, a month just seems like a long time, to me.*

Councilor Hart stated his appreciation for the comments. He knew the streets were being done, but if it didn't look like it, that was perception issue.

Comment: *We're trying to come at this as a non, we're, we just, we're trying to change as a group together.*

Mr. Cummings stated that under the contract with Jacobs, they were sweeping more than budgeted. If the Council wanted more sweeping done down there, they'd let them know the cost of that, and if the budget was approved with the increase, it would be done. He would work with Jacobs to ensure what they were supposed to be doing was actually being done under the existing contract price. But he'd check with the Public Works Director to see what it would cost to add a once-a-week sweeping, and the Council would then need to decide if they wanted to approve the budget to do that.

Councilor Hart stated it sounded like the ask was that they'd received lights, so could Jacobs put them on the poles. One of the issues was that they'd pull staff off of doing something else, and there was only so many staff under that contract.

Mr. Cummings stated there seemed to be different conversations about this. He initially thought they wanted to string lights across from pole to pole, and he told them that wasn't allowed by Idaho Power, unless the city wanted to take ownership of all the poles and accompanying things such as the wiring, meters, etc. He wanted a plan from the downtown group. The city was allowed to put the Christmas decorations on the poles, but anything done on the poles, the city had to do that. No third party could do the work. Just putting the lights on the poles could probably be done under the franchise agreement with Idaho Power, but crossing the right of way, pole to pole, that wouldn't happen. However, they could do that on their own buildings. Also, the right of way was up to the face of the building. Anything put out there would require a right of way permit from the city. Apply, it would be reviewed by city staff, and if it met the requirements, it would be approved. But, with the power washing, it seemed they were asking the city to help fund that, and staff could acquire costs and the Council could approve or not approve that. If trading new lights out that weighed less than what was put up there now, and less usage, that was the plan needed to convince Idaho Power. Basically, anything put on those poles, the city had to do that under the franchise agreement, and the city had to take on the full risk. If anything happened to any of the poles, Idaho Power would only replace it with a wooden pole, which would look awful. To replace it with anything else, the city would have to purchase the pole, and take ownership of the pole from that point forward.

Councilor Hart asked with regard to the power washing of the sidewalks, would they need consent from every business? Was it their sidewalk, or could the city power wash, whether they say okay or not?

Mr. Cummings reminded the Council that around seven years ago, the city did the downtown clean up through Revitalize Ontario, and a lot of city personnel and some business owners, did power wash and sweep the streets and sidewalks. He, personally, was chewed out by four different property owners to stay out of their alcove, or behind their building. So, based on that, steam cleaning or power washing, yes, get every property owner down there to give permission to do it. He indicated to someone in the audience that she was there when that occurred.

Comment: Yeah, but that, it wasn't, that was right after COVID, right, when you guys closed down the street? I think it was 'cuz they closed down the street. We were all closed for eight weeks, and then they closed down the street and nobody could get to us.

Mr. Cummings stated not, it was just a weekend cleanup.

Comment: Oh, okay, 'cuz I was thinking, 'cuz after...

Mr. Cummings stated staff went down

Comment: Oh, I thought you were talking about when they poured the, like the....

Mr. Cummings stated it was before the rebuild.

Comment: It must have been before I was there. I don't ever remember anybody....

Mr. Cummings agreed it might have been before. It was on a Saturday.

Comment: *...and I'm in my seventh year.*

Mr. Cummings stated he was shocked how much staff was chewed out by the business owners for trying to help clean it up.

Comment: *Well, we can be the bridge to make sure that that doesn't happen, because I would think that, for the most part, we are all obviously on the same page of having it cleaned up. And yes, Ashton's brought up that his basement could be flooded. I mean, there's people that know their building, and I'm sure if you talk to each business owner, 'cuz we're already planning to talk to everybody, trying to get this all figured out. So we will have it organized...*

Mr. Cummings agreed the water would be the issue. He didn't know if it would be something larger than the city's large water truck. But, again, they would need all the business owners on board to protect their front entrances. Messing up and hitting the side of a building would take the paint off, and would create a mad property owner.

Comment: *Well, that's again where if we could sub-contract that out, obviously you'd have to have insurance and liability, and that's where we're kind of going at it. You would hire somebody that is their main business, is pressure washing sidewalks, driveways, things like that, then they have their liability insurance. You know, we pre, your going to have pre-meetings with all of them, and that's where the guy, a couple of them have said that they'll come over and look at every building, talk to every owner, figure out what the issues are, and how we can mitigate any risks or liability to him, obviously, so...I mean, that'd be the smart way to do it. But, we just need water access. Just seems like there's not any down here. You know, I can bring out a couple hundred feet of hose to get some, but....*

Mr. Cummings stated almost everything talked about took money. Public Works was a contractor to the city. Anything done extra required extra compensation. That's why they were before Council. Personally, he loved Christmas and would love to see the downtown area lit up, but it had to be done properly, and not put the city at any risk. Were they trying to string lights across the right of way?

Mr. Erlebach: *I'd just like a conversation 'cuz we've actually never talked about how or what it would look like, so that's again, the first step in the conversation between the city and community members.*

Comment: *Who's restricting us from going across the street?*

Mr. Cummings stated the problem was the light poles. They belonged to Idaho Power, and he'd already spoken with them multiple times, and the answer was always no. Even though they told Mr. Erlebach it was the city's franchise, and that was true, and he had spoken with the same person who was speaking with Mr. Erlebach, and he specifically told him that he had told Mr. Erlebach absolutely not. A private entity could not hook to those poles, and if the city did it...and he told Mr. Erlebach how to handle it. If the property owners wanted to string lights from building to building, they just need permission and an engineer showing the connection points were strong enough. They'd need a cable to hook the lights to. Those connections and cables had to be engineered to handle wind loads, etc. Same with the connections to the buildings. All that would be done by a right of way permit, showing what they wanted to do, and then, most importantly, the building owner's permission to connect to their building.

Comment: *So that's like a yes, right? It's yes if the business owners say that you can connect onto, and it has to obviously meet code.*

Mr. Cummings stated yes. To meet code, make sure someone was certifying the connection points, the cable that's being used, and meeting the minimum clearing height across the road, which was 18 feet from the road surface.

Mr. Erlebach: *I measured a couple of those new cable lines. There's one that runs through your parking lot and it's attachment point at the pole is 17 feet, so the crown in the middle of the road would be more like 16, so I'm not sure, you know, I mean like, is that a, is that just for us, or is that for the utility people that are running them across their main street here?*

Mr. Cummings stated it was for everyone because any lower wouldn't meet code. The code was out of the state codes. That was a state highway street crossing regulation the city had to abide by. He couldn't swear that there weren't any saggy lines, but if the line was hit, whoever's line it was, would get the bill.

Mr. Erlebach: *Since you're asking about engineering connection points and stuff, would that be a budget item for the city to help pay for? I mean, I don't really, you got Christmas lights which would be, what, 10 pounds for a 100 feet or less? Five pounds? So the, you know, 'cuz if you're wanting business owners now to split that bill, I mean, I don't know how much a right of way permit is.*

Mr. Cummings stated it was cheap. It would be up to the Council if they wanted to hire an engineer to do that. Did the Council want the city doing that, or did they want the business owners to do it.

Comment: *So, again, we're back to the, you know, the second stage. First, presentation, second get you guys together whether it's here or a different meeting style.*

Mayor Folden voiced her appreciation for their enthusiasm. It was exciting that they all wanted to make the downtown area beautiful. She encouraged them to stay motivated, because together maybe they could get something going.

Mr. Cummings stated the first step was to get a plan submitted. The city currently paid Jacobs to hang the existing lights and the flowerpots. If that was going to be swapped for something different, but he didn't know if that was what everyone wanted. The Chamber provided the wreaths that were currently installed for the holidays.

Councilor Bakefelt encouraged the presentation to include a return on investment. Something that could be that when there were large lighting displays, it drew in visitors. Maybe find some numbers from other areas, like Caldwell, to see what's happened to their downtown. That would be good information to have in their plan. That would help sell the idea.

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, no, actually the Chamber of Commerce, they have an app that tracks that. It tracks the phones at an event in a specific area, time and place, so, you know, we could actually, he could do like even a before and after, or see, you know, what the traffic was before, so we can, we can kind of track that. Technology, ya.*

Councilor Bakefelt stated he could also get some data from like Caldwell, as to what they've seen. It was a wonderful idea, and it would bring in a lot of cars and people who would eat and shop. Great idea, but it's like all in the presentation.

Mr. Erlebach: *Ya, no, it is. I mean, we've, I think downtown just having the Tater Tot Festival move from downtown to the park lost business all weekend. Like a significant drop. Businesses were shutting down at 4 o'clock or earlier, just because nobody was down there. So, again, Revitalize....what they're supposed to be doing, or their mission statement on their website and what they're founded by was historic downtown improvement, and now they've moved away from that and it's significantly dropping traffic, just with the one even they put on. So, and again, I've been trying to actually contact them, get into their meetings, they don't have it scheduled anymore online, and then they don't really want to, they were busy with the Tater Tot Festival so they couldn't really set up meetings to be able to do that because we do have one, two, we probably have four different entities that don't work together right now. So that's the frustrating part, is four visions that need to come together to make one great step for the community.*

Comment: *Revitalize says that they have open meetings, but then they obfuscate access to them.*

Comment: *With them also moving the Saturday market, absolutely killed all of us on the weekends. I mean, that was absolutely the worst thing for us on the weekends. We, we dropped sales probably over 50%, you know, and that just is, honestly, it's making it tough for us little businesses downtown to actually want to be there and actually want to survive at this point.*

Mayor Folden stated she thought their ideas were great and she appreciated all the time they had put into it. She wanted to hear more, and encouraged them to put something together.

Ashlee: *That's what we have to do. Basically, so we have to come, if we come with a quote and all the business say yes that we want this done and what do we have to have signatures and things like that? Just everybody saying this this is what we want, and then with a quote, and then we present it to you guys so that we can hopefully get the funds to do it? To Dan? So you're the one that we're supposed to be nice to, so we can get this? Does he like cookies?*

Mr. Cummings laughed and stated no, they didn't have to be nice. That's just where it started. And he did like cookies. He stated they needed to get their plan to him, he'd review it, and then bring a proposal to the Council for budgeting if that was their direction. He had dealt with the downtown area since '74, with many different groups and owners, but they were correct. Right now, there were four different entities and it was frustrating that they couldn't get them all working together. He provided Mr. Erlebach the rules the city had to abide by.

Comment: *I have a question. I am curious. So, other towns that do light up their downtown, are we to assume that they're using the power poles, that the city owns those poles, not Idaho Power?*

Mr. Cummings stated it was his understanding that yes, most of those were. The city had planned to place new light poles downtown that would have been owned by the city. They had budgeted around \$800-900K to get that project done. But, what stopped that from moving forward was the city discovering that not only would the city have to accept ownership of all the poles, but all the underground power lines to each one, and the mainline was in the alley behind all that. Idaho Power was exempt from the state electrical codes. When a new connection was placed, a new meter on one side and new pole on the other side, they were supposed to upgrade all the wire, too. He obtained a quote for that, it was \$1.5M. So the million dollar project turned into a two and half million, plus future maintenance of all of that, all on the city. Budgetarily, that put a stop to the project. He had been told directly by Idaho Power on numerous occasions that any poles damaged in that area, they would only replace it with the wood pole. If the city wanted to change it at all, with a metal pole, or a decorative pole, whatever, the city would have to pay for it and take ownership. That's why the city was protecting those down there, as best as possible. He would address it if someone ran into a pole and damaged it, and Idaho Power wanted to replace it with a wood pole, he'd be saying no to the wood pole. He would want to remove the damaged pole to see if it could be rebuilt and reinstalled.

Comment: *Do we rent the poles, or...? I'm sorry. That might be a dumb question. Do we rent the poles? Do you guys rent the poles, as a city or no?*

Mr. Cummings stated no. The city paid a blank fee for power to those poles. Idaho Power maintained them.

Comment: *Then how long has that been a thing?*

Mr. Cummings believed it was in the '60s.

Comment: *And so we don't own them still, because, okay.*

Mr. Cummings stated no. Idaho Power was trying to change that, and ODOT. All the new poles going through Nyssa and Vale on the state highway side of things, those were put in by ODOT and owned by Idaho Power. They were not doing those programs anymore. If someone wanted anything but a wooden pole, the city would have to own them. From East Idaho North, on North Oregon, all those poles did belong to the city. That was done during the rehab of North Oregon.

Comment: *So we could hang lights down there then, like going across?*

Mr. Cummings stated if they met the rules, then yes. They'd have to make sure the light poles, north of Idaho, he wasn't sure if they were tall enough to meet the height requirement.

Comment: *...that down were 25 feet, so even if you have like a two foot sag in the middle, which you have no matter what, even if you have a cable, it'd meet the requirement of 18 feet.*

Mr. Cummings stated he was referring to the new ones. He didn't think they were that high.

Comment: *So why did we buy those ones and not the ones downtown?*

Comment: *Infrastructure costs. Idaho Power....*

Mr. Cummings stated that was a total rehab/rebuild. Idaho Power was going to put wood poles, but the city said no. Revitalize Ontario was part of that.

Councilor Kirby stated he was a downtown merchant at that time and there was a Local Improvement District, and new sidewalks were installed and repaved the parking lots. This group was coming to the Council to pay, but back then, the downtown merchants and property owners got together and formed an LID. They taxed themselves for 10 years, so everyone paid. They could always tax themselves to do a big project.

Mr. Cummings stated he believed if memory served, that only purchased the land and built the parking lots, but did not do any improvements on North Oregon.

Councilor Kirby stated many of the buildings had freight elevators down from sidewalk level, so there were walk spaces underneath that all had to be filled in.

Mr. Cummings reiterated he was in support of anything to make the downtown area nice, but it came down to who was going to pay for it.

Councilor Mills asked if all the businesses downtown were showing interest in participating in the holiday venture, or had they been able to contact any of them besides themselves?

Mr. Erlebach: *There is a significant group of people that are, that have gotten together. Again, we do have push back from people that don't want to see change, which is kind of surprising in a positive manner. But yeah, we're getting good feedback from, and they're actually, most of these gals here are putting on a new event kind of in lieu of the Frosty Fest, a Hometown Holiday, and we already have lots of vendors and tons of people and activities. We're also having the business owners make activities as well, so people will not only just be vendors on the street, but they'll be coming into the businesses doing activities, you know, like making ornaments or kind of quilting things, so we're trying to make it a community event, so yeah, we're getting everybody together that we can.*

Councilor Mills asked if the businesses were just limited to main street in town, or was it extending to some other business streets.

Mr. Erlebach: *So far, we've just tried to get the historic area up. Again, once you get a heartbeat, an area, again, like Indian Creek, I mean, that, if you guys haven't been over to Caldwell, that, I mean, they put on events, they'll bring in the fire department to spray the kids with hoses during the summertime; they're having an Oktoberfest here shortly. So I mean, once you get a heartbeat, now you can see what happens and the community starts coming down there, people from other communities start coming over, right, and that brings, again, buying stuff. We're lucky enough where we don't have sales tax, so then we can, you know, get more people from Idaho to come over here. So that's the goal, and then, you know, expanding. I don't know if you're talking like you know from South Idaho up is it westward, or you know, I'm not sure what the expansion area you're trying to get towards.*

Councilor Mills stated she was thinking of some of the main 4th Avenue, Idaho Avenue, maybe 1st and 2nd Streets. It was just curiosity.

Mr. Erlebach: *Yeah, we're trying to get a heartbeat back.*

*Comment: I would say we're definitely very, we're very *** right now, and then definitely we're focusing on the positive because in the past what we had, we just had some negative people and now we're looking at what can we do all the time to move forward as a group, and I think that we're making the effort to community with all the businesses now on Oregon Street because of them before were never even approached or anything like that so we're just, we're coming together and we're trying to make sure that we're all on the same page. Because some business owners, they don't even, you know, they just don't know. They've never been approached and they don't know what they have to do to make it. If we said hey, you know, we've got this money to spray your thing, I highly doubt we're going to find anybody down there that's going to say no, we don't want our business clean, our business front clean.*

Comment: To me, it's kind of like when you think of Caldwell. I instantly think to Indian Creek. That is the heartbeat of Caldwell. Downtown Ontario? That would be goal eventually. Downtown Ontario would be Indian Creek for Ontario.

Comment: And there's some really great shops. We have great shops that have moved in, so, I mean, if you haven't been into any of the new stores, I mean, Moonflower Merc is pretty awesome, Silly Goose obviously, there's Select Players. These are businesses that have come down here because they want to make the difference, so we do have beautiful businesses downtown. Now, we just have to clean up. Like they said – that 50% of the people don't come into the businesses because of the store front, and they'll say it's so dirty, your sidewalks are so dirty outside, but love your business, I'll still come because they know us, but we don't, we're kind of having those people that are just bypassing us right because they're over here saying, oh, downtown is scary. So, we'll work on getting our, everybody together so we can get that street cleaned for sure, because that's a big thing for all of us.

Mayor Folden thanked them again for attending the meeting, and she was looking forward to their plan.

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance #2840-2025: Repealing OMC 2-14 and Dissolving the Diversity Advisory Committee

Dan Cummings, City Manager, presented.

Due to concerns about losing federal funding and federal grants based on the current federal government administration and Executive Orders and repercussions thereof, the City Council determined it was in the best interest of the Ontario citizens to dissolve the city committee, known as the Ontario Diversity Advisory Committee.

The city had already received several federal grants, as well as a few preliminary approvals, and was moving forward with those grants. Also, staff applied for other federal grants that could be at risk of losing funds under the current federal administration.

The City Council held numerous council meetings to discuss the ongoing concerns of the current federal government administration Executive Order, as they related to compliance with the Order, or the possibility of losing federal funds, along with possible fines or suits against cities that did not comply.

At the Council Meeting of August 26, 2025, the Council approved a motion to dissolve the Diversity Advisory Committee established under Ontario Municipal Code ("OMC") Title 2, Chapter 14, and directed staff to prepare and present an ordinance dissolving the Diversity Advisory Committee and repealing OMC Title 2, Chapter 14 in its entirety.

On September 9, 2025, the City Council approved Ordinance #2840-2025 on first reading and the ordinance was being presented for the second and final reading of the ordinance by title only.

It was unknown what the financial impact could be if the ordinance was not passed. It was determined that an emergency passage was applicable to ensure no loss of current federal funding.

BRADEN moved, MILLS seconded, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 8.2(2) OF THE CITY CHARTER, THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE ORDINANCE #2840-2025, AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ONTARIO REPEALING ONTARIO MUNICIPAL CODE TITLE 2, CHAPTER 14 IN ITS ENTIRETY, WHICH CHAPTER CONCERNED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SECOND AND FINAL READING BY TITLE ONLY AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. Roll call vote: Mills-yes; Braden-yes; Hart-no; Contreras-no; Kirby-yes; Bakefelt-yes; Folden-yes. Motion carried 5/2/0.

DEPARTMENT HEAD UPDATES

Fire & Rescue: Quarterly Report

Clint Benson, Fire Chief, presented.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ODF Greenspace Master Plan

Dan Cummings, City Manager, stated this was an update of the ODF grant that the city received, plus a couple other updates.

ODF was the Oregon Department of Forestry, and this was a grant. In phase one, they'd do a study, next was to get the plan done to remove trees, and then replenish the trees. The city received three proposals for the Greenspace Master Plan. The RFP review committee, who was Michael Braden (Grant Consultant), Corinna Hysell (Grant Committee), Jay Hysell (Parks Maintenance), and Tyler Whitaker (Parks Committee) met on September 11th, and ranked the three applicants. First was Greenworks, Portland; second was Cascadia Partners, Portland; and third was Breckon Land Design, Garden City. The group would start the negotiation process with Greenworks. A meeting was scheduled for tomorrow for the scope of work discussion to make sure the consultant understood the project. That negotiation committee was him, Michael Braden, Al Haun, and Marshall Pierce. If all went well, they'd proceed with bringing a contract back before Council.

Second, regarding the traffic signal enforcement. Chief Cooper met with a firm, and had them working at reviewing the intersections, at no cost, and they would develop an evaluation, plan, and cost as to implementing the plan. There was a second contact, and the city was going to finish up with the first party before moving on with the second party.

Lastly, Council was aware the police department was having a difficult time filling some police positions. There were currently five open positions. Prior Chief Iwai asked to budget another police officer instead of an Ordinance Officer, however, there was an issue with only having one Ordinance Officer. Therefore, he was proposing to the Council to take one of the budgeted police officer position funds and to bring on an additional Ordinance Officer instead. He'd like to advertise for the position, because they could get an Ordinance Officer on board much quicker than a police officer. This request was not to imply that officer position wasn't needed, but it wasn't going to get filled for possibly another budget cycle. They needed additional staff to address the ordinance issues currently happening in the city. Further down the road when the other four positions were filled, they could return to Council seeking the funds for that last police officer. It was felt there was an immediate need to get another Ordinance Officer on board.

Councilor Hart stated he supported the thought, but as already discussed, the process of what happened if they doubled the amount of ordinance violation, tickets written, but no visible improvements in how the community looked, that didn't work. He, as a Councilor, appreciated having a better understanding of the process, but were there barriers to getting owners to do what could be done, or what the city could do to make the existing ordinance officer more productive. Where there other issues that needed resolution related to the process?

Mr. Cummings stated the City Attorney was helping them review the ordinance, and drafting procedures to do that. The city was going to beef up the codes, and ensure a good understanding of the process of enforcing the ordinances. The city also needed to work with the local judge to make sure staff wasn't wasting time citing people just to have their citations dismissed. The threats were going to stop, and enforcement was going to be done. It was something that needed to occur.

Councilor Kirby stated 8 of 10 calls he received were for weeds or graffiti, and those were called in to Vale to create a paper trail. He was very much in favor of the action.

Mayor Folden stated she was in favor, too.

Councilor Hart stated they had spoken about utilizing technology to help the officers be on the street more. Was that something being explored? That might take one time funding, but where were they at in addressing some of the shortages in staff.

Mr. Cummings stated that was part of the RFP for the body cams. That would record and go directly into the reports on their computers. The current system used for tracking ordinance citations was not good, so staff was reviewing some possible programs to make that more user friendly and easier to track reports. Costs for that were unknown currently, but staff was working to get things done as requested by Council.

Councilor Mills stated that some of the burnouts and garbage piles were being cleaned up. She was happy about that. Trish was doing an amazing job. There was definitely a need for a second Ordinance Officer. Also, the parks and cemeteries looked great. Jacobs did a great job on those.

HAND-OUTS

Minutes:

County Court: Sep 8, 2025, Sep 10, 2025

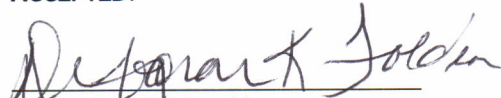
CORRESPONDENCE, COMMENTS, AND EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

Councilor Kirby stated the Sister City delegation would be at City Hall on October 2nd, and there would be a western event on the 2nd. He encouraged them all to attend. There were 29 delegates coming from Ontario's sister city Osakasayama, Japan.

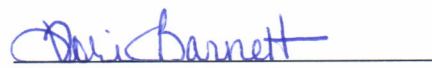
ADJOURN

KIRBY moved, CONTRERAS seconded, **THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED**. Roll call vote: Mills-yes; Braden-yes; Hart-yes; Contreras-yes; Kirby-yes; Bakefelt-yes; Folden-yes. Motion carried 7/0/0. Meeting concluded at 7:40 p.m.

ACCEPTED:


Deborah K. Folden, Mayor

ATTEST:


Tori Barnett, MMC, City Recorder

