

The City of Portland
City Council
September 2, 2025
5:30 PM

City Council was called to order by Mayor, Jeff Westlake at 5:30 PM on Tuesday, September 2, 2025. Roll was called and present were members Matt Goldsworthy, Mike Aker, Ashley Hilfiker, Dave Golden, Ron May, Kent McClung and Michele Brewster. Also, present were Attorney, Wes Schemenaur, Clerk-Treasurer, Lori Phillips, Rob Weaver (WPGW) and Ray Cooney (CR).

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of City Council minutes from August 18th, 2025

Motion by May, seconded by Brewster to approve the City Council minutes from August 18th, 2025 as presented. Roll call vote. All voted aye.

Claims Docket

Motion by Goldsworthy, seconded by McClung to approve two payroll dockets; August 2 for \$156,967.82 and August 16 for \$153,980.12. General, Water and Sewage claim #115982-116306 in the amount of \$3,696,601.33. Roll call vote. All voted aye.

Chad Aker, Jay County Commissioner and Ed Curtin, RDC Consultant Update on 68-acre / 50-acre proposals

Chad and Ed presented a comparison between the proposed 50-acre and 68-acre projects. They noted the pros and cons of both options. The county is looking at the option of bidding on 50 acres of land on Tyson Road (for the development project). It is unknown if the READI funds can be reallocated to the proposed 50-acre location. In closing, there was an ask of \$400,000 (from the City Council) to contribute to this project. No action was taken at this time.

Randy Stephens, Ohio Valley Gas – Discussion on Ordinance 2025-6; Permit for road cuts

The request was made by Randy Stephens that Ohio Valley Gas be exempt from Ordinance 2025-6. Ron May proposed that they be exempt from paying the \$500 fee. In place of the fee, he proposed that an assurance bond be presented to the City of Portland in the amount of \$10,000. Wes will work with Mayor Westlake to amend this ordinance. It was noted that the main objective of this ordinance is to know when road cuts are being made and assurance that the road will be repaired equal to (or better) than the condition it was in immediately prior to the cut.

Street closure request – 4th Annual Fall Festival on September 27th

Reda Theurer- Miller requested that East Main Street between Meridian and Harrison be closed from noon to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 27th. The event will consist of vendors, food trucks, fall flowers and other items to purchase. Motion by May, seconded by Hilfiker. Roll call vote. All voted aye.

Ron May – Discussion for Centralized Dispatch

Ron noted that he would like to start a conversation on centralized dispatch. He stated the reason for the discussion is based on the reduction of property tax revenue and the need for upgrading the dispatch console.

- Mayor Westlake noted that as long as he is the mayor, he is not interested in entertaining the idea on centralized dispatch.

- Chief Mock noted that the console will need to be upgraded along with the county wide radio system.

- It was recommended that Barry Ritter (Radio consultant hired by the county) speak to City Council to share the pros and cons of centralized dispatch. Mayor Westlake noted that he will reach out to Mr. Ritter.
- Mayor Westlake noted that he wasn't present for the radio meetings. It was noted that he and Mock were both invited to all of those meetings. Mock noted that he did attend (virtually) some of the meetings.
- Mike Weitzel noted that the pricing for the radio upgrade contract expires on September 18th.
- Mock noted that centralized dispatch is a discussion that should have been had a long time ago.
- Matt noted that this is the appropriate time to have this discussion and if there's a cost savings, maybe it's time to move forward with it. Chad Aker (Commissioner) noted that the city could save money by not purchasing a new console for Portland dispatch.
- Kent noted that the county would more than likely request financial assistance from the city. This amount would need to be factored in to see if there is a cost savings.
- Mayor Westlake noted that he is not looking at this option anytime soon.

2026 Budget Discussion

The proposed budget for 2026 is \$10,221,500 with a combined advertised tax rate of \$1.8921. The current budget is \$10,608,778 with a combined tax rate of \$1.6050 (advertised at 1.9704). The proposed budget has been decreased by \$387,278.

Estimated impact from SEA 1: 2026 loss of \$153,300; 2027 loss of \$307,250; 2028 loss of \$726,140

Lori asked the council what questions they may have about the budget. Ron May asked about the increase in the Park budget. Brian Ison, Park Board President, came to the podium to answer questions. The following was noted regarding the park / pool budget:

- Brian noted that the pool is always in the negative. It is not a money maker, but an amenity to the City of Portland. Brian noted the following reasons the pool is in the negative: wages, utilities and repairs & maintenance. He also noted that since the waterpark was constructed, no additional funding has been allocated for the pool needs. He noted the park and pool budget are combined, but they have separate line items for specific uses. Ron noted that the pool is an amenity to the city and realized that it will take a loss each year. Ashley noted that she does not want to see the pool close due to a loss each year.
- Brian noted that some of the increases to the parks budget are attributed to the following: Shared projects at the junior league diamond, maintaining the walking trail at Hudson Park, and remediation for the pond erosion.

Mayor Westlake asked Chief Mock to come to the podium and asked him if he had any comments to his budget.

- Dustin noted the following: His budget for new vehicles in 2026 has been cut. He stated that TODAY he was told (by Lori) that the LOIT funds are not going to be allocated to the police department in 2026. Lori noted that this was discussed several months ago in a department head meeting and is due to legislative changes. Lori noted the 5 or 6 police vehicles in the parking lot that are not being utilized and suggested holding off buying new cars this year. This suggestion is due to the lack of LOIT fund for 2026 and the vehicle's not being utilized. Lori noted that over the last 5 years the police department has purchased 15 different vehicles plus 1 leased vehicle. Mock stated that he would not argue over the vehicles in the parking lot. Goldsworthy noted the number of vehicles not being used is a fact and not arguable. Mock also noted the shortage of police officers at this time. Mock noted that eight (8) of the vehicles in their fleet need to be replaced now. He asked if the vehicles could be added back into the 2026 budget and be subsidized from another fund. Goldsworthy noted that unfortunately funds need to be cut and this is a logical budget cut.
- Mayor Westlake questioned if SEA 1 was a sure thing. Lori noted that the bill passed and it is indeed a sure thing. Lori noted the estimated impact for the next 3 years. Goldsworthy noted that the mayor needs to read the senate bill and that the estimates given by our legislators in all that we have to go by at this time.

- Mayor Westlake questioned the truth of Police and EMS being excluded from 2026 LOIT distribution. Lori suggested to the mayor that he review the bill.
- Jeff again questioned why the Police Chief's budget request is not being fully funded. Goldsworthy noted that it's not good practice to have a budget in the red. He noted that the city has been fiscally responsible in the prior years, but cuts still need to be made. Hilfiker noted that the police department has rarely ever been told "No" and that the council has supported their needs. Jeff noted that he didn't have any clout over the budget (in spite of him having the budget sheets). Ashley noted that preparing the budget is the clerk treasure's job... Jeff noted that it is the mayor's budget and moving forward he wants to make it. Goldsworthy noted all that the requests (from the police department) in the last six (6) years that the city council has approved. Golden noted that the city council (over the recent years) has given the police department more than any other department. Golden questioned liability insurance renewal estimates (due to the amount of tort claims). Lori noted that at this time, it doesn't look good. May questioned if the city will have coverage next year. Lori noted that yes, the city will have coverage, but the cost is unknown at this time. No action was taken on budget and there were no requested changes by the council. The budget hearing is scheduled for September 15th.

Council Comments

Kent – Noted how the formula for property taxes has changed and the negative impact that this has caused for local government. He thanked department heads, Lori and Mayor for working hard on the budget and for making reductions where they could be made.

Dave –

- Noted that we are in touch times, but in the 2026 budget we have managed to avoid an loss of services to the community, nor any loss of jobs. Thanked Lori for the time put into preparing the budget.

Ashley –

- Noted multiple vehicles parked on sidewalks. Mayor Westlake noted that residents should call dispatch and report these issues as they see it.
- At the request of a resident, she asked if a timer could be put on the lights at the pickleball court (so they can play later in the evening). Matt Shauver noted that there are currently no lights at the pickleball court, but that he will work on getting a light installed at this location.

Matt – Noted that there is no "Us against You" going on and that the "unknowns at this time" is very stressful. He asked the department heads to be patient as we navigate through these touch times.

Ron –

- Noted that rolled up carpet was dropped off at the recycling trailers by Pizza Hit. He asked if a camera has been installed. Mayor Westlake noted that he is working on this.
- Requested that the mayor amend the sidewalk ordinance to include the option of making payments for the installation of sidewalks through the Sidewalk Program.
- Requested an update on finishing the sidewalk on Blaine Pike. Mayor did not have an update at this time.
- Requested that a process be put in place for council members to be added to the agenda. Mayor Westlake noted that he will reach out to other mayors and get more information on this topic. Kent noted that council members have the right to be added to the agenda and if by chance the mayor removes that item, the Council President can overrule the mayor.
- Questioned if there was an ICE protest at the corner of Votaw and Meridian Street over the past weekend. Mayor Westlake noted that he stopped at this event and that those individuals present were promoting God and not causing any issues.

Mayor's Report

- Noted that there were no issues during the Tri-State Tractor and Engine show.
- Encouraged residents to look at the artificial flowers that he placed in the flower pot on the Southwest corner of Walnut and Meridian Street. He welcomed community feedback on these flowers.

Clerk Treasurer's Report

- Nothing further to report.

Adjournment Motion by McClung, seconded by Golden to adjourn at 7:02 p.m.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:



Lori Phillips, Clerk-Treasurer



Jeff Westlake, Mayor