

2021 Annual Town Meeting Follow-up: Community Policing

The City of Forest Grove's Committee for Community Involvement (CCI) arranges and conducts an Annual Town Meeting to discuss topics of importance to the Forest Grove community. In recent years, those topics have included fire governance, emergency preparedness, and the meaning of a "full service city". Because of many high-profile national issues, as well as some recent events in Forest Grove, CCI chose community policing as its topic for the 2021 ATM.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this year's ATM was held virtually on Zoom, with options for attending in person, as well as streaming via Tualatin Valley Community Television (TVCTV). Henry Reimann, Forest Grove's Interim Police Chief, and Jesse VanderZanden, the City Manager, combined to address police staffing and training, mental health responses, the officer discipline process (both criminal and administrative), the status of the police chief hiring process, and the future of the police facility. The recorded version of the meeting and the PowerPoint presentation can be found at <https://www.forestgrove-or.gov/bc-cci/page/2021-annual-town-meeting>.

The police-related questions were answered at the meeting. However, CCI asked staff to answer questions that were not answered at the meeting. Below is a list of questions that were not related to police matters, which have been routed to the appropriate staff person for response.

- 1. Q: Is the current agreement with TVF & R to cover the leadership position at the Forest Grove Fire Department a sign that the idea of the Western Washington County Firefighter's Association will be abandoned? Which members of the city council support the Western Washington County idea and which desire to abandon it and become a part of TVF & R? And how much notice will residents receive if the city council decides to pursue folding its department into TVF & R?**

A: The City is one of five entities that comprise the Western Washington County Fire Task Force. The other entities include Gaston, Forest Grove, and Cornelius Rural Fire Districts and the City of Cornelius. The Task Force was formed to discuss fire governance options and in 2020 recommended to all five governments that a Western Washington County Fire District be studied for possible formation. The Task Force is studying that option now. If and when the Task Force recommends a District option, it will go back to all five governments for additional consideration. This process is expected to take a minimum of two years. If all governments agree to a local fire district, it would have to be approved by the voters. More information can be found on [April 26, 2021, Council Work Session on Fire District Governance](#).

- 2. Q: Is the City planning to ban back yard burning?**

A: The City's burn ban was initially discussed in 2013 and went into place in 2014. The Council's decision added Forest Grove to the growing list of cities in the metro area with burn bans. However, Council's decision acknowledged that Forest Grove has large wooded lots where burning may be necessary for cleaning up after the winter storm season. The Council's solution was to prohibit burning during the fall months, but allow the fire department to issue exemption permits for lots over .75 acres. The department has issued very few of these permits during the

fall burn season. Yard debris burning remains open inside the city limits from March 1st to June 15th. Any additional restrictions to backyard burning would have to be approved by the City Council.

3. Q: What is the status of the proposed new grocery store and the development of the property at the corner of B and Pacific?

A: The Forest Grove Urban Renewal Agency (Agency) owns Site B at the corner of B and Pacific Avenue, directly west of the Jesse Quinn apartments. In an effort to continue revitalizing downtown to support local small businesses and the community, the Agency publicly advertised for proposals to construct commercial and residential buildings on the lot with a requirement to construct affordable housing if residential was proposed.

Fresh Foods' proposal to construct a downtown grocery store and affordable housing was accepted by the Agency Board and an exclusive negotiating agreement was signed to negotiate the terms of what would be constructed and what financial incentives may be needed. Fresh Foods continues to "sharpen the pencil" in an effort to reach a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA), a binding agreement between the Agency and Fresh Foods that defines the final project scope and financial terms for all parties.

Fresh Foods has reached out to Washington County, who receives and administers all public monies eligible for affordable housing, for financial assistance. Pending this outcome, a DDA is expected to go before the Agency Board this fall for approval. If approved, the project could be constructed as soon as next spring.

4. Q: How will the City manage parking with the 21st Avenue Festival Street that is in the planning stages?

A: The current plans for the Festival Street, which is 21st Avenue between College and A Streets, do not close the street or eliminate parking. There are two concepts being discussed: converting this section from one way to two way traffic and keeping it two way traffic. Both options result in fewer parking spaces in this area, however, neither option eliminates parking. As these options progress, the City is looking for alternatives to replace, and possibly increase, parking; as well as demand management techniques, i.e., improved signage, to mitigate potential losses. For more information on the current status of this project, please go to: <https://www.forestgrove-or.gov/urban/page/festival-street-project>

5. Q: What are the plans for addressing homelessness in Forest Grove?

A: Addressing homelessness requires compassion and collaboration to resolve and involves multiple governing agencies. The City Council has been actively addressing this issue to help refine the city's role and what measures it can take to assist those most in need. For more information, please visit [February 8, 2021, Work Session on Homelessness Roles](#) and [May 10, 2021, Homeless Policy Update by City Attorney](#) (pdf page 51).

It is important to note that the federal and state government provide monies to address homelessness, however, as a “non-entitlement” community under 50,000 in population, the City of Forest Grove is not eligible for these monies and therefore relies on Washington County to provide and fund wrap-around services such as mental health, shelter, food, job training, and connections to either transitional or permanent supportive housing.

With the passage of a 2020 ballot measure in the Metro area, Washington County’s budget for homelessness services will increase from approximately \$2 million per year to an estimated \$75 million per year in 2022. These monies can be used for services such as supportive housing, mental health, outreach, transitional shelters, and more. The County has engaged in a public process to actively seek proposals from non-profits to provide these services, including the Forest Grove Foundation, Project Homeless Connect, and more. The City looks forward to working with area non-profits and the County to partner and address this issue holistically and compassionately.

6. Q: What major building projects are pending?

A: The City receives this question many times and provides a page on the website that is routinely updated with all building projects. See <https://www.forestgrove-or.gov/projects>

7. Q: Are there any plans for low income housing? Will the new town hall and engineering building plans include upper levels of low income housing such as was done in the new library building in Cornelius?

A: Yes! Bienestar has applied to construct 37 units of affordable housing on Main and 26th. Additionally, the Urban Renewal Agency is requiring affordable housing on Site B and current proposals seek to construct 20+ units there.

The City Council has passed several measures to incentivize affordable housing. Some examples include: 1) deferral of system development fees until occupancy, which allows for easier construction financing; 2) property tax exemptions for non-profits who construct and/or manage affordable housing, which reduces the cost to construct and manage affordable housing; and 3) incentives to add more units in high-density areas if some of those units are for affordable housing, for example, allowing up to 20 additional units in certain zones provided a portion of them are for affordable housing. Additionally, Centro Cultural and Forest Grove Foundation recently purchased the Forest Grove Inn to provide housing for those unhoused and transitioning to more supportive or permanent housing.

The Metro housing ballot measure, which brings additional resources to purchase and/or construct affordable housing, is being implemented by Washington County. As a non-entitlement community, the City government of Forest Grove is not eligible to receive these monies, however, works very closely with Washington County, non-profits, and private parties to facilitate, fund, and construct affordable housing.

Regarding the remodel of City Hall and the addition of a development services annex, current plans show the building will be fully occupied by city staff.

8. Q: How is the City involved with the solar array on Hwy 47? What has been the outcome so far?

A: The solar array on South Hwy 47 between Forest Grove and Gaston is outside the city limits and Forest Grove Light and Power's service area. It is on private property in cooperation with Portland General Electric (PGE).

9. Q: Can the City please change the community info flyer color to cream colored paper for those who have visual acuity challenges?

A: Done. The City will request the mailing vendor use cream or pastel colored paper.

10. Q: How are FG & Cornelius supporting local food pantries, specifically? How are they making best use of home & neighborhood gardening?

A: At the onset of COVID, the City facilitated communication amongst community food pantries, i.e., School District, Pacific, Oregon Food Bank, Senior Center, Meals on Wheels, to help coordinate services and respond to increasing needs. What became evident is the existing distribution network lacked storage capacity to inventory and preserve surplus food for future distribution.

In response, the City worked with the Forest Grove Foundation to purchase a food truck that could distribute food locally and worked with a private storage facility to provide storage space. The Foundation recently secured a grant from Washington County to continue providing these services during COVID. The City extends its appreciation to our community volunteers and non-profits for their help in assuring food goes to those most in need.

Regarding community gardens, the City proudly boasts many open and accessible community gardens for residents to enjoy. With the coming construction of Stites Park, the City will be relocating the community gardens near the Forest Grove substation to Stites Park and will be adding gardens to assure ample future capacity. For more information contact Anne Lane, Parks & Recreation Director, at 503-992-3237 or alane@forestgrove-or.gov.

11. Q: How can community members safely volunteer during COVID social distancing?

A: The City encourages residents to follow all federal, state, and county guidelines regarding COVID. Please visit the City's website at <https://www.forestgrove-or.gov/cm/page/city-response-coronavirus> for more information.