



City of Independence Minutes

**Community Services & Parks Sustainability
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, December 16, 2025**

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Seiler called the meeting to order at 10:10 am

2. **Roll Call/Welcome and Introductions.**

Present: Chair Erin Seiler
Committee Member Nathan Christensen
Committee Member Bradley Karkanen
Committee Member Jasper Smith
Committee Member Vickie McCubbin

Absent:

City Staff Present: Kenna West, City Manager
Myra Russell, City Recorder
Rob Moody, Finance Director
Amanda Carey, Finance Director
Patrick Bodily, Library Director
Amy Christensen, Museum Director

2.1. **Committee Member Introductions.**

- Chair Seiler—member of the budget committee
- Member McCubbin—chair of the museum board, member of the library board.
- Member Karkanen—member of the library board and president of the Friends of the library.
- Member Christensen—chair of the library board and on the budget committee; his wife, Amy, is the museum director.
- Member Smith—member of the Parks board and member of the museum board

2.2. **Staff Introductions.**

- City Manager West-City Manager
- Finance Director Moody—outgoing finance director
- Finance Director Carey—new finance director
- Library Director Bodily-Library director since 2020
- Museum Director Christensen—involved with the museum for a decade, currently museum director

3. **Committee Goal.** Chair Seiler talked about the goal and said that the timeline is about 12 weeks to get a recommendation ready for the city council.

4. **Staff Presentation: Current Financial Conditions and Short-Term Revenue Options.**

4.1. **Structural Deficit Overview.**

4.1.1. **High level summary of current funding gaps.**

Finance Director Moody explained the term structural deficit. If revenues for a year are less than expenditures for that same period the result is a drawn down of the reserve balance. The city has been in this situation in their budget for several years. The reserve balance, also called contingency or fund balance, should be around \$1.8 million. Last year it was \$750,000. Revenue is projected to increase by 3–5% while costs are projected to be in the 6-7% range. This will create a gap.

4.1.2. **Questions and discussion.**

None

4.2. **Short-Term Revenue Options.**

4.2.1. **Overview of potential levy for voter consideration.**

FD Moody discussed revenue strategies to address financial challenges, emphasizing that cutting expenses alone is insufficient due to the faster growth of expenses compared to revenues. A two-pronged strategy involving both cuts and controlled growth was proposed, with a discussion on implementing a levy or a fee. A levy, which requires voter approval, was considered but deemed unlikely to be ready in time for a May 2026 vote, with November 2026 as the earliest possible implementation date. Alternatively, a fee could be approved by the Council and implemented by July 2026, with revenue expected by August 2026. The group also discussed comparing Independence's potential fees and levies with those of peer cities to provide context and inform decision-making.

4.2.1.1. **Revenue projections and timeline.**

A levy can go on the ballot in the spring of the fall. May 2026 is too early. If it was on the ballot for November 2026, and passed, the city would not see those monies until November 2027.

4.2.1.2. **Comparison to peer and regional city levies.**

The group analyzed current service levels and costs for libraries, museums, parks, and public safety, comparing Independence's options for a fee and/or levy to other Oregon cities of a similar size.

4.2.1.3. **Questions and discussion.**

Question about current service levels for library which is currently operating 4 days a week and no funding for materials and books.

4.2.2. **Overview of potential Council-adopted fee.**

Similar discussion regarding fees.

4.2.2.1. Possible fee structures and cost estimates.

Discussion on the differences between fees and levies, noting that while levies may appear higher per individual, they can generate similar total revenue as fees. The committee considered the political viability of a levy election and expressed concerns about equity in fee structures.

4.2.2.2. Comparison to peer and regional city fees.

4.2.2.3. Questions and discussion.

Discussion of hiring a PR firm to give a levy the best chance to succeed.

Discussion of making fee for city services instead of a separate public safety fee and a separate community services & parks fee.

5. Committee Discussion and Input.

5.1. Initial reflections on short-term options provided.

The group discussed using a public safety fee as a "life support" measure while developing long-term economic strategies, with the flexibility to sunset or modify the fee as needed. They explored the possibility of combining the public safety fee with other city services, noting that while fees are flexible, any council decision could be reversed by future councils.

5.2. Identification of additional items Committee members wish to explore.

The committee had questions about more long term solutions. These will be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Proposed Next Meeting Topics.

6.1. Review of Previous Meeting Presentations.

6.1.1. Short-Term Revenue Options.

6.1.2. Presentation of follow-up materials or questions.

6.2. Other/Long-term solutions.

6.2.1. Overview of potential district models (e.g., special districts).

6.2.1.1. Pros and cons.

6.2.1.2. Operational and governance considerations.

6.2.2. Economic development strategies that may support long-term sustainability.

6.3. Committee idea-sharing: additional concepts members would like staff to research or present.

Discussion of the structure of utility fees, with a focus on whether fees should be tiered based on different types of properties like residential, commercial, and industrial. They explored the implications of charging different fees, considering how it might affect business attraction and the perception of fairness. The

discussion also touched on the need to educate voters about the purpose of these fees and the importance of service delivery, while acknowledging the challenges of misinformation and social media influence.

The committee discussed reviewing the 2040 vision plan and considering demographic changes since its last update, but agreed that immediate focus should be on sustaining existing services rather than adding new ones. The group also explored reasons for a previous levy failure, including external factors and misinformation, and concluded that a new levy proposal in May might be premature, suggesting a need to first address service sustainability.

6.4. Confirmation of next meeting agenda.

Targeting a February recommendation date to the council, the committee needs to meet again quickly. Next meeting January 8 at 10 or 11 AM.

7. Next Meeting Date.

7.1. Option 1: Tuesday, December 30 (limited member availability). R. Moody available but Shawn Irvine not available).

7.2. Option 2: Wednesday, January 7, any time after 11:00 a.m. (R. Moody retired so not available but new Finance Director A. Carey available and S. Irvine available).

7.3. Option 3: Thursday, January 8, between 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (R. Moody retired so not available but new Finance Director A. Carey available and S. Irvine available).

January 8 was chosen as the date for the next meeting.

8. Adjournment. Chair Seiler adjourned the meeting at 11:46 am.