CITY OF GEARHART
Worksession of the City Council
Tuesday, July 29, 2025
6:30 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

A worksession of the Gearhart City Council was held Tuesday, July 29, 2025. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone.

Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Paulina Cockrum, Councilor Preston Devereaux, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Sharon Kloepfer, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker, and City Treasurer Justine Hill. A quorum of the Council was present.

Mayor Smith opened the worksession. He explained that the purpose was to discuss Councilor Gould's proposed changes to Ordinance 930 and next steps for the Public Safety Building project. He noted that the Public Safety Building topic was going to be covered first.

There was a brief update given by Administrator Sweet on the current tsunami notices and activity.

Administrator Sweet transitioned into the discussion about the Public Safety Building project. He indicated that Mayor Smith, Councilor Cockrum, and himself had been in contact with Paige Richardson, public relations consultant, regarding some preliminary options for moving forward with a bond on the Public Safety Building. Administrator Sweet went over a handout, *Public Safety Building: Ballot Timing Options*. He talked about the purpose of the worksession; the current status of the project; ballot timing options (Option 1 and 2); cost impact of delay; strategic budget use (if May 2026 is chosen); and the feasibility of lower interest rates cancelling out inflation. He noted that the consultant did mention that the upcoming November election may have a low voter turnout rate (off-year, no major State/Federal races), which could negatively impact the Public Safety Building's chance of passing. Administrator Sweet also mentioned that the City is in discussions with the Oregon Building Department regarding unfunded mandates in terms of critical infrastructure requirements on essential service facilities.

Administrator Sweet indicated that the City is at a key decision point of whether to move forward with a vote in November 2025 (Option 1) or wait until May 2026 (Option 2). He summarized by saying that delaying the bond measure to May 2026 gives the City more time to engage the public, explore cost-saving options, and potentially benefit from lower interest rates. He also noted that the choice ultimately comes down to whether the City prioritizes schedule or additional time to strengthen community support.

Councilor Cockrum noted that the consultant felt that the turnaround time for any type of community survey was very short for a November ballot and that election timing was important in terms of better community engagement. Administrator Sweet also explained that the purpose of a survey is to compile more feedback from the residents, which would provide an opportunity for the City to make adjustments on the Public Safety Building project before it is submitted to the voters. Councilor Kloepfer indicated that the Mayor had also mentioned that he would like a certain percentage of support before any ballot title was submitted to the voters. Mayor Smith agreed and indicated he would prefer to wait until May to have better community engagement. There was continued discussion on the feasibility of getting meaningful survey results before the November election submission date and the availability of the consultant to get the survey completed. Councilor Gould requested clarification on the difference between having the Public Safety Building project on the November ballot fail or having a survey that costs money that shows lack of support. She felt that the outcome was the same without having to spend additional money. Councilor Gould felt that $20,000 was too much money to spend on a survey. There was continued discussion on paying for a professional survey and perhaps investigating the possibility of an in-house City survey to cut costs.

Councilor Gould wanted to clarify that during the current Public Safety Building planning process, the Committee did look at every cost savings option. Based on data gathered on the current fire station, she felt remodeling was not a viable option. She explained that costs are important and that by increasing the scope of the project by picking the downtown location, the price went up. Administrator Sweet agreed; however, because of the large price tag, many are asking about the feasibility of a remodel. There was continued discussion on the relationship between other departments (e.g., public works); safety standards (e.g., OSHA); standard size of fire trucks; alternative options (e.g., remodeling); investigating alternative locations (e.g., the Cottages); resiliency (e.g., tsumani); exploring partnerships with other Cities; and the ability to get more insight from the public before November.

Councilor Devereaux stressed that the current fire station location serves the greatest number of people. He agreed it would be more expensive to build in the current location; however, he also felt that remodeling was not an option. He supports the fire station remaining "the heart of Gearhart." He also agreed that the $34 million price tag was a shock. There was continued discussion on the price tag impacting the location; the reality of not reaching a majority of voters in the Town Hall meetings; the need to know what the community wants; and the pathway to get the voters behind their Public Safety Building project.

Mayor Smith felt that a May election would be more appropriate. He did not feel that the Council was operating as a cohesive body in terms of the Public Safety Building project and that there was too much uncertainty on costs. Councilor Gould felt that community participants did their part in creating a new Public Safety Building and she does not want their efforts devalued. There was continued discussion on critical infrastructure and the feasibility of detaching certain departments (e.g., public works, city hall).

The Mayor ended the Public Safety Building discussion and Administrator Sweet said he would reach out to individual Council members to get more information to bring to the next City Council meeting.

Mayor Smith opened the discussion on Ordinance 930, an ordinance regulating contractors' work hours in the City of Gearhart. Councilor Gould had submitted an *Amended Letter* for reference.

Councilor Cockrum provided clarification on a few items in the *Amended Letter*. She talked about the first paragraph regarding the original intent of Ordinance 930. Her recollection of the intent was because of ongoing vibrations from two new sub-divisions being developed. Because the land was not prepared properly for new construction, the developer started using a piece of equipment to compact the ground. To her recollection, the issues did not have to do with landscapers or neighborhood noise complaints. She also clarified that the exclusion of work on Sunday was actually a compromise because the original proposal prohibited work on Saturday and Sunday. There was discussion on whether or not holidays were deliberately left out as an exclusion or left out as an oversight. Councilor Gould did agree that when the Ordinance passed, it was a very busy construction time. She believes weather plays a critical role in contractors being able to perform work and she would like to consider loosening the work hour restrictions (e.g., seasonally).

Councilor Devereaux noted that homeowners can work any day of the week without restrictions and besides the sub-division work mentioned above, there had never been any contractor work hour issues in Gearhart. As far as he is concerned, the restrictions are a huge overreach. There was continued discussion on homeowners being allowed to use "noisy" tools versus contractors using them. There was also discussion on contractors being allowed to work as long as they were not using "noisy" tools. Councilor Kloepfer gave two specific examples of a contractor working inside but still being able to hear the noise outside (e.g., hammering window open; tile cutter in garage). Councilor Gould clarified that the intent of the revisions were not to define indoor/outdoor work but rather define "noise polluting equipment." There was continued discussion on enforcement (e.g., complaint base driven).

Mayor Smith mentioned that former City Attorney Peter Watts had written the Ordinance, and it had not been challenged. He had concerns over altering the language without legal input. Councilor Kloepfer suggested having the new City Attorney review; as well as Police Chief Gregory's input. Councilor Cockrum felt that revising to a 2.0 version would allow the opportunity to improve the Ordinance; as well as allow people to make money in a "quiet" fashion. Councilor Gould agreed that the more eyes on the Ordinance the better; however, when decision making was finally being done, she would like to see language clarification on emergency work. She felt that clarification on emergency terminology was important and would give the City staff guidance on enforcing "emergency" repairs.

Councilor Cockrum clarified she would like to have the original Ordinance 930 with Councilor Gould's proposed edits inserted with strikethroughs and revisions submitted to the City Attorney for review. Councilor Gould agreed and suggested that if any other Councilors had recommendations that they also submit them in writing so that they can also be incorporated.

Administrator Sweet mentioned that the most common complaints heard by the City regarding no work on Sunday are: 1) work is "quiet" so should be able to do it; 2) property owners having a difficult time finding contractors and contractor have availability on Sunday; and 3) weather has been horrible but there is a break on Sunday.

There was discussion on the definition of a contractor (e.g., housekeeper) and who legally is allowable to work on Sundays. There was also discussion on noise and perhaps making sure that contractors are aware that they must abide by the noise Ordinance in terms of playing music on the job site.

The Mayor adjourned the worksession at 8:04 pm.

Mayor Kerry Smith

Chad Sweet, City Administrator