

Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association

December 9, 2020

Officers present: Jim Buck, President; Sandy Davidson, Vice-President; Theresa Tschirky, Treasurer; Tracy Slack, Land Use Chair; Lynn Saint, Secretary.

7:02 p.m. Meeting Called to Order

Approximately 8-10 individuals participated throughout the meeting. Michael Gonzales, the City of Gresham Neighborhood Community Enhancement Manager, sat in as an observer on the Zoom connection.

7:07 p.m. Multnomah County Impact on Services

County Commissioner Lori Stegmann, along with her assistant, Nathan Clark, presented slides describing the influence of Multnomah County. The first slide showed her district in which we reside, District 4. This district starts at 148th Street in Portland, extending through Gresham, to Wood Village and Troutdale, on to, Multnomah Falls to the Hood River County line, encompassing 465 square miles.

Multnomah County holds a population of 821,000 individuals with 112,000 residing in Gresham. Gresham pays a total of 568 employees while the county boasts a total of 6,000 workers. Multnomah County handles a budget of \$2 billion contrasted with \$653 million for Gresham's budget.

Elected commissioners, according to Stegmann, can be voted in for two terms with four-year terms. Elected commissioners will complete their service after eight years. She is currently serving her second four-year term.

Services and Responsibilities within Multnomah County, including links:

- [Animal Services](#)
(link is external)
- [Aging and Disabilities](#)
- [Assessment and Taxation](#)
- [Benefits](#)
- [Circuit Court](#)
- [Communications](#)
- [Community Involvement](#)
- [Community Justice](#)
- [Community Services](#)
- [County Assets](#)
- [County Attorney](#)
- [County Management](#)
- [Diversity and Equity](#)
- [Elections Division](#)
- [Emergency Management](#)
- [Facilities and Property Management](#)
- [Family Court Services](#)
- [Health Department](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Human Services](#)
- [Information Technology](#)
- [Land Use Planning](#)
- [Library \(link is external\)](#)
- [Local Public Safety Coordinating Council](#)
- [Recording](#)
- [Records and Archives](#)
- [Sustainability](#)

Following a brief overview of various departments, she further explained some of the nuanced aspects of the county's influence. For example, she described internal support bases which are not as obvious at a quick glance. Within the Department of County Human Services rest responsible parties to address survivors of domestic violence, individuals with disabilities and veterans. School-based health centers also fall under the influence of the county.

Although Gresham has its own police department, towns such as Wood Village, Fairview and Troutdale rely on the Multnomah County Sheriff's Department. The Search and Rescue Team is enveloped by the Sheriff.

The Department of Community Services relates to animal control, elections, roads and the 26 bridges within the scope of this area. Not only that but this department oversees people on parole who are trying to navigate the system as they require extra treatment to re-enter mainstream society.

In the future, board members are looking at constructing a flagship library in Gresham which will mirror the size of the library in downtown Portland with at least two stories. Land for this building has not yet been determined.

Tax Rate for Gresham

A concern is the fact that Portland residents do not pay as much into county coffers as do Gresham residents. Stegmann revealed that with Measures 50 and 5, a flat rate was established at \$4.34 per thousand in assessment. Gresham has \$3.00 per thousand. Two other categories do not fall under the restrictions: levies and bonds. These are used for education and libraries.

Although the population has increased, revenues have not grown. Right now, there is a deficit of close to 13 million dollars. As a result, officials are looking to change the State Constitution to allow for greater collection of funds.

Tracy Slack queried about the County's website and the lack of equitable coverage for Gresham. "All the money goes to the county-wide level. How is a dollar of revenue divvied up? If the distribution of libraries is misrepresented by the number of people using them, what happens? Are we getting a fair share? There appears no dollar in and dollar out comparison."

In response to Tracy's question, she disclaimed, "There's no way to track money of the contribution Gresham makes, but the information is data and evidence based."

Attention on Rockwood

Gresham comprises 13.86% of the population of Multnomah County. Included are the inhabitants of Rockwood. Soon to open is the Rockwood Health Clinic with culturally specific health services. Non-profits, such as Boys and Girls Club and the Latino Network are taking over other activities.

SNAP data gives Gresham Butte a 2 on the justice scale. Rockwood shows 7+ with 8.8 demonstrating a very high need. The County website reveals much more information needs to be addressed. In analyzing the data on the County Budget page, Jim Buck questioned the emphasis on meeting the needs of people of color which appeared out of proportion with the general ethnic

population of 7% with 38% of the funding allocation. Latinos with 11 % of the population only receive 17%. He asked and commented, “Are Latinos being treated fairly? It appears a large portion are not receiving funding commensurate with the amount of people living there.” A link to the site is found here: <https://multco.us/file/89475/download>

Commissioner Stegmann noted, “There are hundreds of programs. One such program is the HOPE Team with Multnomah County Sheriff’s office. Very specific to East County is Vance Park, known as “the pit.” She disclosed, “The County owns that huge 60-acre parcel which has been used for mining and dumping. The rate of pollution remains unknown. Meanwhile, the County is looking at redeveloping the property through a bond. In the planning stages are single room occupancy shelters, small homes and an amphitheater.”

Homelessness combined with lack of affordability and livability

Strategies around “houselessness” incorporate the AHFE, a large coordinating board encompassing all jurisdictions and all service providers. This is a joint office of homeless services with a \$75 million a year budget. Portland needs an emergency shelter as 100 people every year die on the streets. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation with six-foot apart mandates. She iterated, “It is less expensive to keep someone in housing than to get someone off the streets and into housing. Services for drug and alcohol treatment, job services and training along with mental health treatment are woefully short by about 4,000 units.” Commissioner Stegmann explained the need, “That is approximately the number of housing units in the city of Gresham. We must build a city the size of Gresham for the units needed.”

Stegmann continued, “Multnomah County cares about individuals and families. A new bond measure involving the tri-county jurisdictions will allow for wrap-around services. All three counties are responsible now. Downtown Portland anticipates a behavioral resource center to address people with mental health crises. Their length of stay will amount to a short term of 30 days with a longer term of up to 90 days. Contracting out services is another possibility for placing people into programs and receiving needed attention.

Tracy Slack posited more questions, “In the course of this year or in the next year, is there an analysis regarding the Covid response and the impacts? What has been impacted and what items cannot be dealt with? What is happening and who is working on a recovery plan?”

Commissioner Stegmann responded, “The five-year general fund anticipates a \$9,000,000 to \$13,000,000 deficit. The County is hoping the federal government will come in to help them. Program cuts have had to occur. In the interim, by year five, we should be able to recover. Moreover,” she explained, “a transient lodging tax should be used for increasing revenue as different jurisdictions get a piece of that pie. Conventions are huge and should generate more income. Tourism will help in the future.”

“There is no way to generate income” she emphasized. “We have a broken tax system. People have fatigue in voting for levies and bonds. The issues of compression and a budget shortfall have steadily worsened over the years. For example, the City of Gresham is not rehiring individuals for positions that have been vacated in the last one and a half years.”

Revenue

Stegmann emphasized, “We either need a constitutional amendment or a sales tax. Tourism would gain a tremendous amount of revenue. It might be easier to do a constitutional amendment. People may object to a sales tax. Could this be referred? Tax reform is the number one issue to address. There will be mass evictions of people in January if there is nothing that can be done. Now, there is no way to generate more revenue.”

Measures 5 and 50 have placed constrictions upon the county’s and the state’s ability to garner more funds. The efficacy of the measures at providing a ceiling for taxation has created a greater need to create other means of taxation, either through an amendment or through a sales tax, as previously mentioned.

Furthermore, Stegmann asserted, “Neighborhood associations can pressure cities and counties to reach goals. Critical mass is needed from a grass roots effort.” Jim Buck suggested an annual meeting to address the revenue debacle. No solution currently rests on the horizon.

Wapato

A new participant at the GBNA meeting, a retired nurse, spoke of the incredible stress nurses endure and experience in treatment facilities. She had felt very encouraged upon hearing that Wapato would become a behavioral management center. However, this multi-million-dollar structure never materialized with its promises, either for inmates or for those needing treatment or for the taxpayers for whom it cost \$58 million to construct. In the end, it was sold to a company which then released the County from having to underwrite the costs of maintaining the unused buildings.

Wapato had been built and funded through voter approval as it appeared crime was on the increase. However, once constructed, there was no way the County could maintain the structures, or even consider a conversion to a homeless facility. Many factors had not been considered, including public transportation. Selling it at a loss saved basic upkeep money; proceeds went to help support a housing program.

8:10 p.m. Reports

Theresa Tschirky reported \$2104.15 in the bank treasury account with a large amount earmarked for natural restoration.

Tracy Slack, the land use chair, referenced a homeowner/landowner at the top of Walter’s Hill, planning on constructing a new single residence on an 8 ½-acre parcel. They still need to get water and sewer over to the city lines. The planner did not respond to Tracy’s questions.

8:15 p.m. New Business

Theresa spoke of a tragic accident on Butler in which six teens in a car crashed head on into a Ford pick-up. Three of the teens died. Butler Road invites speeding which needs to be addressed. The HOA for Persimmon has invested for a speed sign. Seeking some traffic calming solutions. There is no money for speed bumps or a median. The accident caused extreme trauma for the residents.

The neighborhood association anticipates meeting on the second Wednesday in February, hoping to address other topics, such as the new mayor.

8:25 p.m. Adjournment

Addendum: Two weeks following this December 9 gathering, GBNA was asked to review a community enhancement grant. Therefore, with the board's approval, the association will meet via Zoom to review the mural request and monies requested on January 13.

Meeting Recording via Michael Gonzeles:

https://greshamoregon.zoom.us/rec/share/E3RUGb1gEaaAxmFWyYL-30zdXEF-mjBTCMv39PuaVWMY_URT5n0pWO6LnngKPoI6.iC5oInNZIGEt-HPe