

**Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations  
December 12, 2023 – Remotely Held (Zoom)  
Meeting Minutes**

NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES	NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES
Centennial		North Central	
Central City	INACTIVE	Northeast	INACTIVE
Gresham Butte	Stephen Estes, Jim Buck, Theresa Tschirky	North Gresham	INACTIVE
Gresham Pleasant Valley		Northwest	Kat Todd, Chris Fast
Historic Southeast	INACTIVE	Powell Valley	
Hogan Cedars		Rockwood	Catherine Nicewood, Deanna Stewart, Anthony Crossman
Hollybrook		Southwest	Kathy Gardenhire, Dana Duval, Thea Hayes
Kelly Creek	Karin Zachow, Carol Rulla	Wilkes-East	
Staff & Guests	Michael Gonzeles, Neighborhood Services Division, City of Gresham; Mike Whiteley, Water Division, City of Gresham; Tam Driscoll, Department of Environmental Services, City of Gresham; Sara Hopkins, GIS, City of Gresham; Tabitha Frasier, GIS, City of Gresham; Scott Forrester; Thomas Stanley		

The meeting opened at 7:04 p.m., Jim Buck, Coalition Co-President presiding.

1. Minutes for November 14, 2023, meeting: With no quorum established, the approval of the November minutes were deferred to our next meeting.
2. Gresham Maps Update, Sara Hopkins, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Manager and Tabitha Fraser, GIS Senior Analyst:

The map is ready to share for feedback on the test version. Several functionalities of the map were demonstrated. A user guide will eventually be available for the final version of the map. The link to the map is:

<https://portal.greshamoregon.gov/vertigisstudio/web/?app=bdee6a79de9d4383a3d7e615f65ec46d> It was requested that we not share the link to the map beyond the coalition members until it is ready to be launched to the general public. Feedback should be sent to Tabitha Fraser by December 22. Her email address is: [tabitha.fraser@greshamoregon.gov](mailto:tabitha.fraser@greshamoregon.gov)

3. Groundwater Concerns, Mike Whiteley, Water Division Manager:
  - a. Update on our transition to an independent groundwater source and partnership with the Rockwood Public Utility: More groundwater wells are being developed

(Gresham has 3 existing wells). The goal is to have our independent groundwater system up and running by the end of our wholesale contract with Portland in June of 2026. Even though there have been challenges, they are on track to be fully independent by late winter 2025 or early 2026. This will give us time to test the system and be sure it is fully operational before we become fully independent.

b. Preliminary questions on groundwater concerns were provided to Mr. Whiteley. Here are the responses:

1) Question: The city's Cascade Alliance webpage indicates that testing showed "minute" amounts of radon in groundwater sources. What was the level of radon found? How does it compare to proposed EPA thresholds for radon in water supplies? Will the city be filtering or treating the groundwater to remove radon? If not, why not?

Response: Current radon tested in our groundwater is 200-580 pci/l. The National Institute of Health reports that the average radon in groundwater used by the public is 540 pci/l. Radon is a naturally occurring component and is very common in groundwater systems (about half of all the groundwater systems in the country have some levels of radon). The variations of the level of radon are affected by how long the water has been sitting in the wells, how it is transmitted through the groundwater source, etc. Radon in the drinking water is not the main concern for health reasons. The main concern is breathing in radon fumes and the possibility of getting lung cancer. Radon fumes can be released from the water but the NIH reports that it is probably only 1% of the total radon fumes that may be ingested from the air. If the state has a Multi Media Mitigation (MMM) program to mitigate airborne radon, the EPA threshold for radon is 4000 pci/l for groundwater—if no MMM, then the threshold is 300 pci/l. There is no current, enforceable regulation for radon levels in drinking water. Pilot testing for treatment was done (pack tower and deep bubble aeration testing) on the groundwater. Both methods produced <1% pci/l. If warranted, there is space available to implement treatment at our facilities. Based on the recommendation from the water quality consultant, they are confident that the state will develop an MMM program that will meet the EPA standards and the decision has been made to not treat the radon at this time.

2) Question: The webpage also indicates that excessive manganese was found and that the city will be filtering manganese using chlorine. What was the level of manganese found and what level will filtration reduce it to? Is the cost of this treatment already covered in the approved water rates?

Response: We will be using filtration for the manganese. The chlorine is like a binder for the manganese and allows it to be filtered out. Manganese is currently labeled as a secondary contaminate at the limit of 0.05 mg/l, but recently it has been found to pose a possible health risk to pregnant women and children. With these findings, manganese is becoming an "emerging contaminant." Manganese is not currently regulated as a contaminant but as an emerging contaminant, it is expected that it will be regulated in the future. Gresham water wells have measured up to 0.23 mg/l but are typically 0.05 mg/l to 0.13 mg/l. Gresham is taking a proactive approach since our groundwater wells are showing a level that is higher than what is anticipated to be what the EPA will likely set as level goal for manganese. The treatment for manganese that is planned for the Alliance (Gresham and Rockwood) groundwater system is absorption pressure filters.

The design removal of manganese is expected to bring the levels down to <0.02 mg/l after filtration. The cost of manganese filtration treatment was included in the cost estimate for the groundwater project rates.

3) Question: What are the hazards/contaminants in the water & with the infrastructure for our groundwater system vs. Bull Run water? What treatment is proposed for other groundwater hazards/contaminants besides radon & manganese?  
Response: Besides the radon and manganese discussed in the above questions, the areas of concern are that there will be a higher level of iron in the system (this is typical with a groundwater system) and there will be a higher level of hardness in the water. The treatment of iron is the same as the treatment of manganese. The areas where the groundwater system will be better than the Bull Run water: (1) a decrease in disinfection by-products (Portland currently disinfects by chloramination, which is chlorine with the addition of ammonia (chloramine). Chloramine is a more stable form of disinfection which stays in solution longer for the miles and miles of transmission of the water from Bull Run. The problem with any type of disinfection with chlorine when there is organic matter in the water, which Bull Run has, there could be disinfection by-products such as acids which can be carcinogenic. A groundwater system does not have that organic matter so our disinfection by-products will be significantly lower.) and (2) better overall treatment of lead and copper (Portland, in the past, has not treated for lead and copper. Recently, Portland has started a corrosion control treatment and the lead levels have gone down significantly. Gresham has started a pilot program and while the final results are not in, it appears that we will not have to add any corrosion control treatment.)

4) Question: Well water usually has more mineral content than Bull Run water. How hard will this water be in comparison? Will we need to use filtered water for appliances like irons?

Response: Water hardness classifications are (mg/l CaCO<sub>3</sub>): soft 0-60, moderately hard 61-120, hard 121-180 and very hard 181+. Portland water is soft—typically <10 mg/l. Gresham groundwater wells are ~ 60 mg/l. With this increase in hardness and silica, there could be a little more scaling than we are used to having. While the increase in scaling and discoloration should be minimal, there is a campaign planned to inform residents of options to minimize any effects.

5) Question: The city has said that the cost of using our own groundwater system will be significantly cheaper than continuing with Bull Run water. Now that we're further along with developing our groundwater system and Portland is further along with their filtration plant, what is the latest estimate for the difference in costs for groundwater vs. continuing with Bull Run water?

Response: This is hard to quantify. Portland does not provide updated estimates to "wholesalers" that are leaving the system (Gresham, Rockwood and Tualatin Valley). The differences in the 2021 cost estimates compared to where we are now: Portland - \$850 million to now \$1.4 billion (40% increase); Gresham \$70 million to now \$91 million (30% increase)

6) Question: Are there cost overruns with the new groundwater system? If so, what is the estimated impact to Gresham ratepayers? Would rates already approved through 2027 need to be increased?

Response: Gresham Council approved a 5-year rate package that included cost increases for water which was based on our knowledge of what the costs were going to be at that time for the groundwater system. Project costs have increased 30-40% but there is no intention of returning to council to reevaluate that 5-year rate structure. Things that will help to hold to the original rate structure: some of the newly drilled water wells have shown to have a higher than expected capacity which allows us to defer the drilling of more wells to the future, some of the projects have come in significantly less than anticipated, continuing to explore grants such as the bipartisan infrastructure loan (BIL) grant from the state of Oregon and there are grants available for treating emerging contaminants (like manganese—both Rockwood and Gresham may get around \$1.5 million each in grant money), prior contingency planning, and assessing future projects and deferring where applicable. At this time, adjusting the 5-year rate package is not anticipated.

3. Neighborhood and City News and Reports:

a. Neighborhood Services Report: Michael Gonzales: No report

b. Co-President Report:

1) Carol Rulla:

(a) The council did approve putting the \$1.35 per \$1000 levy on the May ballot. The intent is to use the next few months for outreach about the levy. The City Manager and the Mayor will be at our January meeting. If you have any questions to ask in advance, email the coalition account.

(b) The coalition account received an email from KATU. A reporter is looking into slower response times from the police and wanted to know if any of our members had had a personal impact from a slower police response. If you do, let us know and we can connect you with the reporter.

(c) Reminder that coalition officer elections will be held during our January meeting.

c. NA Reports and Concerns. No reports.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dana Duval – Coalition Secretary-Treasurer

Next meeting: <b>Tuesday, January 9th</b>
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