

Garibaldi City Council Workshop Minutes

Monday, June 8, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

Convening Of Meeting

The Mayor called the workshop to order at 4:00 PM. In attendance were Mayor Linda Bade, Council President Cheryl Gierga, Vice President Bud Shattuck, Councilor Connye Corey, and Councilor Tom Porter. Staff in attendance were Interim City Manager/Finance Officer Becca Harth, City Recorder Amy Cram, and Fire Chief Tad Pedersen.

She noted that, as this was a workshop and not a business meeting, the Pledge of Allegiance would be omitted. The Mayor established ground rules for the session, advising that four agenda items would be covered within one hour. She explained that the council would discuss each topic first, after which members of the public would be invited to comment by raising their hand, stating their name for the record, and approaching the table due to recording limitations. She reminded everyone that no formal decisions could be made at a workshop.

New Business

City Manager Hiring Process

The Mayor opened discussion on the hiring process for the vacant City Manager position, noting that an interim was currently in place. She explained that the city's code required public comment on certain elements of the process particularly the candidate qualifications and that the council's goal for the workshop was to reach a general consensus on an outline for the hiring process. She proposed that the plan be refined at the July workshop, then formally approved at the subsequent business meeting.

Councilor Gierga asked whether a professional recruiting firm had been used during the previous city manager search. The Mayor recalled that the city had initially contracted with a firm referred to as WBCP but had not ultimately received candidates through them; instead, one candidate (Mr. Boone) had been met informally at a League of Oregon Cities (LOC) meeting.

Harth confirmed that the prior search had been conducted largely in-house, with postings placed on the LOC and OAMR platforms, among others.

The Mayor raised the question of whether the council wished to use a professional firm this time. Councilor Gierga expressed support for using a firm, noting it was within their professional scope. The Mayor acknowledged this preference but pointed out that hiring a firm had not been budgeted. Harth shared that she had contacted the City of Manzanita, which was currently conducting its own city manager search, and received a ballpark cost estimate for using a firm.

The Mayor noted that the city's attorney had also suggested a specific firm. She expressed a personal inclination toward using a firm, citing the two prior hires that had not worked out. Councilor Shattuck asked whether a firm would also vet candidates. The Mayor acknowledged that WBCP previously found candidates but did not vet them, and that vetting had been a separate cost. Councilor Gierga agreed that vetting must be included in any firm engagement. Harth agreed to research this.

The Mayor directed the council's attention to the existing position description, noting that several details were now outdated particularly given work that had since been completed with ODOT. She encouraged all council members to review and annotate the position description over the coming weeks and submit edits through Harth so the document could be refined ahead of the July workshop.

Harth noted that the salary range from the prior posting had been \$95,000 to \$120,000, and that the council would need to revisit this figure. She also pointed out that a portion of the budgeted city manager's salary was currently being used to pay the interim, which would need to be factored into whatever salary was ultimately offered. The Mayor requested that a staffing analysis showing budgeted salary dollars be prepared for the July work session, after the budget was approved. Harth confirmed this could be done for the July meeting.

Regarding interview structure, the Mayor recalled that the previous process had included two large interview panels one comprising council members and one comprising peers such as port leadership, the Bay City city manager, and city staff. She asked whether the council wished to replicate this structure. She also raised the question of public involvement, noting that a "meet and greet" had been held for one prior candidate but not for Mr. Boone. She expressed clear support for involving the public in some capacity this time.

Mike Saindon, General Manager of the Port of Garibaldi, addressed the council. He reflected on his involvement in several prior hiring processes and offered several observations. He cautioned against rushing to hire simply out of a sense of urgency, saying the city was in good hands with Finance Director Harth for the time being, though he warned that she would quickly become overwhelmed if required to perform two roles without additional interim support. He strongly endorsed the two-panel interview model, with one panel of council members and one panel of professional peers from other agencies, emergency services, and neighboring cities. He recommended that a public meet-and-greet be held the evening before the final-round interviews, where community members could informally score candidates. He also emphasized the importance of finding a candidate with the strength to make difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions, and the ability to maintain a unified front with the council while keeping communication open with the public noting that a lack of transparency had contributed to problems with the prior city manager.

Heidi Parker, participating via Zoom, echoed General Manager Saindon's comments and suggested a "soft launch" announcement such as social media posts or connecting with Manzanita's concurrent search to gauge candidate interest before committing to a firm's fee.

Carolee North, a community member, urged the council to develop a clear priority list of what they expected the incoming city manager to accomplish in the near term, so candidates could honestly assess whether they were a good fit. She identified completing the outstanding audits as a top priority, arguing that without that, the city could not move forward on infrastructure needs. She stressed that candidates should not be blindsided by the challenges they would face and that authentic, direct answers during interviews not polished deflections were what the community needed.

Judy Riggs, a community member, added that accessibility and proactive community engagement were qualities she had missed in the prior city manager. She expressed a desire for someone who would visit new businesses, drive around town, and be responsive to citizen concerns rather than directing people to "make an appointment." She also reiterated her point about firm costs potentially exceeding the lower estimates.

Tim Hall, a community member, urged the council to rigorously verify candidate credentials, noting that the city had been "fooled twice" by individuals whose qualifications did not hold up to scrutiny. He recommended reviewing the prior work done with the WBCP firm and reaching out to principals there about their vetting standards. He expressed confidence that qualified candidates could be found for Garibaldi and emphasized the importance of hiring someone who would support staff in doing their jobs effectively.

Carolee North returned to the microphone to add that the Garibaldi Business Association represented a valuable and growing community asset, and that the incoming city manager should have respect for the business community and engage with its meetings.

The Mayor wrapped up the discussion by summarizing the path forward: council members would submit edits to the position description through Harth; the July workshop would be used to finalize document changes and decide on whether to use a firm; interview questions from the prior process would be located and brought forward; and the plan would be formally adopted at the following business meeting.

Fire Department Levy Discussion

The Mayor invited discussion on what the council's role would be in advancing the fire department's levy renewal.

Fire Chief Tad Pedersen reported that the county elections department had been contacted and recommended placing the levy on the November 2027 ballot. He explained that the current levy's tax collection would expire at the end of the 2027–2028 tax year, making that the latest practical window. He noted that if the November 2027 measure failed, a follow-up attempt could be made in May 2028.

Finance Director Harth confirmed the timeline and noted that the process would involve completing a state elections form (believed to be SEL 802 or similar), drafting a ballot title, and organizing public outreach. Fire Chief Pedersen noted that the ballot title would largely mirror the prior levy language, emphasizing that it was a renewal, not a new tax. He also noted that the rural fire district providing nearly half of the department's funding was on the same election cycle, meaning both would need to go to voters simultaneously.

City Recorder Cram indicated she had spoken with a county elections representative who had provided guidance on timing but suggested the city attorney be consulted to confirm whether an earlier election date

such as May 2027 might be possible. Harth agreed to reach out to City Attorney Mark Wolf for guidance and indicated she might have a response by the Monday council meeting or would bring it back in July.

Fire Chief Pedersen observed that the busiest period for the department in terms of both call volume and community events like Garibaldi Days and the Fourth of July coincided with summer, making it difficult to devote significant time to levy preparation simultaneously. He acknowledged that recruitment remained the department's biggest ongoing challenge and that public outreach efforts were constant.

Carolee North raised a concern about the fire department's public relations standing in the community, noting that residents' confidence in the department needed to be strengthened before a levy vote could be expected to succeed. She emphasized that this was not a reflection on Fire Chief Pedersen personally, but rather a broader communication challenge. She credited the department's recent joint exercise as a positive step in demonstrating cohesion and active engagement. She also praised the quality of care residents received when the department responded to calls and encouraged more visible community presence.

The Mayor summarized that while no immediate action was required, the levy renewal needed to be formally calendared, and the department should begin building public confidence through ongoing community engagement.

Accounting Software Discussion

Finance Director Harth presented a proposal to transition the city's accounting operations to a new software platform. She introduced the topic by noting that the transition would not happen overnight the full conversion process was estimated to take nine months to a year.

Councilor Corey expressed an initial concern about the timing, questioning whether Harth already had too much on her plate to take on a major software migration. Harth responded that the extended implementation timeline made this workable, and that she did not view it as an undue burden.

Harth shared that she had proactively consulted the city's auditor regarding the proposed software and that he had responded positively noting that most of his municipal clients already used this platform, meaning he was familiar with its output. He did note that setup takes time, which Councilmember Corey acknowledged was not necessarily a disadvantage given the city's current situation.

Councilor Corey noted from her own research that some users had found the new system to be less intuitive than alternatives, and that its custom report output was not filterable, which could limit usefulness. However, given that the city's own auditor was familiar with and supportive of the platform, she accepted that this concern was mitigated.

Harth outlined key benefits of the new system. First, it would allow vendor invoices to be uploaded at the time of payment, enabling instant retrieval by vendor names, a significant improvement over the current process, where responding to auditor requests for specific invoices could take hours of physical searching through boxes. Second, the system would support electronic timecards, with a geolocation-based clock-in feature ensuring employees could only log time when physically present at the office. Third, the system would consolidate what two separate programs are currently, one for utilities and one for accounting onto a single platform, eliminating the double-entry of data that currently consumes staff time. Fourth, the system offered built-in reporting capabilities, including graphs and charts, that the current CenterPoint software could not produce.

Councilor Porter observed that the software had the potential to end the city's chronic pattern of falling behind on annual audits, which had persisted across multiple administrations. The Mayor provided context, explaining that every mayor since Suzanne McCarthy had inherited overdue audits, and that the current backlog had roots in multiple circumstances including a failed attempt to switch from cash-basis to accrual accounting, a change that is impermissible for a government entity which required extensive rework and caused significant delays. She emphasized that Finance Director Harth had made exceptional progress, completing three audits in approximately one year, with the fourth currently in process. Once the fourth audit was complete, the city would be only one year behind (the fiscal year 2026 audit, which would not yet be due).

Judy Riggs expressed frustration that more detailed cost information had not been presented during the budget committee hearings, as she felt it would have informed the committee's deliberations. She also questioned whether a formal cost-benefit analysis quantifying the staff hours saved had been prepared. Finance Director Harth acknowledged she had not tracked her hours spent on audit-related retrieval tasks and therefore could not provide a precise figure but maintained that the time savings would be substantial. Riggs acknowledged the value of the efficiency gains but maintained that such an analysis would have been helpful to the budget committee.

The Mayor noted that no decision needed to be made that evening, as this was a workshop. The discussion

would continue, and the software decision would ultimately need to be incorporated into the city's budgeting and procurement process.

Celebrating the 4th of July

The Mayor raised the topic of Fourth of July celebrations, noting with some urgency that July 4, 2026, would mark the 250th anniversary of the United States. She acknowledged that the timing was tight for planning anything substantial.

Councilor Gierga asked when the city had stopped hosting fireworks on the Fourth of July, with the Mayor estimating it had been since the late 1990s. Councilor Shattuck recalled that the fire department had previously been authorized to set off fireworks but that the process now required engagement with commercial fireworks companies such as Western Fireworks, which came at significant cost. He also noted the challenge of competing with Rockaway Beach, which hosts a well attended Fourth of July event.

Councilor Corey expressed interest in doing something to mark the 250th anniversary but acknowledged the compressed timeframe. She noted that the Garibaldi Business Association had briefly discussed a porch parade concept but that it had not been formally committed to by the end of their meeting.

Heidi Parker, participating via Zoom, suggested a low-cost community participation idea: encouraging residents to decorate their yards and promoting the effort through the city's Facebook page, describing it as something like a neighborhood spirit contest. She emphasized the value of community engagement at minimal cost.

The Mayor acknowledged the ideas and indicated that a broader discussion of all upcoming community events through the end of the year including Garibaldi Days and the tree lighting would be placed on the agenda for the June 15 council meeting, with the goal of getting ahead of planning rather than scrambling at the last minute.

Adjournment

The Mayor adjourned the workshop at approximately 5:20 PM, announcing that the next meeting would be the regular council business meeting on Monday, June 15, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Becca Harth", written over a horizontal line.

Becca Harth, Interim City Manager/Finance Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda Bade", written over a horizontal line.

Linda Bade, Mayor