

City of Lowell Oregon
City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2025

The Lowell City Council held a regular meeting on November 18, 2025. The meeting location was at the Lowell Rural Fire Protection District Fire Station 1 at 389 N. Pioneer Street, Lowell, OR 97452. Mayor Weathers called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

City Councilors present: Mayor Maureen Weathers, Jimmy Murray, Gail Harris, Don Bennett, and Tim Stratis

City Councilors absent: None

Staff/others present: City Administrator Max Baker

Approval of Agenda: There were no changes to the agenda.

Consent Agenda:

The consent agenda included financial reports from September 2025, check register from October 2025, leave register from October 2025, and meeting minutes from the October 21, 2025 regular meeting and November 4, 2025 work session. No items were pulled for additional discussion.

Motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Councilor Murray and seconded by Councilor Stratis. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Weathers: YES; Murray: YES; Harris: YES; Bennett: YES; Stratis: YES

Public Comments: No Public comments received.

Staff Reports:

City Administrator Baker provided the following updates:

City Administrator Max Baker reported that the 2024-25 audit was progressing well, with the contract accountant completing the first rough draft for staff review. The review had been completed since the report was written, and the accountant was waiting on answers to some questions from the auditor. Mr. Baker anticipated the audit would be submitted on time, likely with a presentation early in the new year. He noted that the city ended the year in a good financial position with no unexpected findings.

Mr. Baker reported submitting a letter of intent to Lane County for the hazard mitigation grant program opportunity, which was an extension of the existing IGA for emergency services.

The Water Treatment Plant sedimentation basin project remained on hold, with Mr. Baker having reached out to Holly from USDA and expecting to hear back soon.

The Planning Commission approved LU 2025-02, the Whipple Estate subdivision, at the November 2, 2025 meeting. The appeal period had expired with no appeals filed. Mr. Baker explained this was his first land use process from start to finish and was a good learning experience. He also reported that LU 2025-04, a hillside development permit for a new single-family dwelling, had been approved with conditions from Civil West, which is standard for properties with slopes greater than 15%.

Councilor Bennett asked about lots 1 and 11 on the subdivision layout, noting that they appeared to include part of the right-of-way. After discussion, Mr. Baker clarified these were private utility easements to allow access to sewer and storm systems, not purchases of right-of-way. He agreed to double-check the calculations showing larger lot sizes for those parcels.

Mr. Baker reported working with RCAC on a cybersecurity policy to meet USDA requirements for future funding, provided at no cost to the city.

Parks staff and volunteers were preparing for the tree lighting event scheduled for December 6 at 6:00 PM. Park restrooms remained closed due to vandalism, with staff waiting for vendors to replace the doors. Padlocks had been installed at Paul Fisher, and staff had sealed the top part of the caboose and resealed cracks and joints to protect it from weather instead of using a tarp.

Regarding the Covered Bridge IGA with Lane County, Mr. Baker reported receiving an email that they had received approval from the National Historic Bridge Society to put anchors in and repair the roof. The county had also agreed to replace the parking lot lights before the bridge lighting event.

Mr. Baker returned to the code enforcement topic, reporting that the second quarter code performance follow-up had received a positive response. He noted that 27 letters had been sent out, and all but two property owners had brought their properties into compliance. He was working with the City Administrator from Oakridge to begin early talks on an IGA for support with difficult enforcement cases.

Public Works Report No questions were raised on the Public Works Report.

Library Report

Mr. Baker provided an update on the bricks for the library, noting that replacement bricks for the 11 typos had been received. He also mentioned that Peggy had reopened brick sales as regular donations rather than as part of a capital campaign.

October 2025 Lane County Call Log

It was noted that the call log was extensive, with 18 calls already recorded for the current month.

Presentations: No presentations

Old Business: None

New Business:

County wide Debris Contract-Discussion/Possible Action

Mr. Baker reviewed the countywide debris contract discussed at the previous work session. He explained he was seeking council consensus on three questions: whether the city would be interested in sharing a service agreement, whether they'd like to be involved in the drafting/review process, and whether there were any existing debris contracts. Mr. Baker noted the benefits would include streamlining the FEMA process and skipping the procurement process by being under an agreement.

Mayor Weathers asked if Mr. Baker wanted to be involved in the drafting process. He responded that while he would participate in reviewing ongoing calls, he did not want to sit on the committee or be involved in drafting.

The Council unanimously agreed to participate in the shared service agreement without being involved in the drafting process, as the city has no existing debris contracts.

CA Eval, Review draft Evaluation Form and Timeline-Discussion/Possible Action

Mr. Baker presented a draft evaluation form from ICMA (International City/County Management Association) with minor modifications. He explained the timeline would ideally match up with other staff evaluations in March, which would be before budget preparations for the fiscal year.

Councilor Don expressed concern about being unable to evaluate some items, such as media relations, that he had not observed. He did not want to give a middle rating that might appear negative when he simply had not witnessed those activities.

After discussion, the Council agreed to modify the form to include a "not observed" option that would not count against the overall evaluation score. They also discussed having staff and committee members provide feedback directly to the Council to help with areas Council members may not directly observe.

Mr. Baker suggested that sections 7 and 8 regarding staffing might be better moved to a narrative section with input from staff rather than having Council rate them. The Council agreed to have Mr. Baker revise the form and bring it back.

The tentative timeline would have the evaluation process occur in February/March with finalization at the March meeting, in time for budget preparations for the next fiscal year.

Reservoir Cleaning Quotes-Discussion/Possible Action

Mr. Baker presented quotes for cleaning the city's potable water reservoirs, correcting a typo where he had written "portable" instead of "potable" throughout the agenda and quotes. Staff recommended Potable Divers Inc. as the low bidder, which also offered additional services needed by the city.

Mr. Baker explained that the concrete reservoir has cracks at the 26-foot mark that actively leak water. All three companies provide video inspection and integrity checks as part of their cleaning service. The request for up to \$8,000 (versus the quote of \$5,400) would allow flexibility if additional epoxy or labor was needed for repairs.

Mayor Weathers clarified that the recommendation was based on more than just the low bid, and Mr. Baker confirmed that staff had checked references and found Potable Divers had good recommendations from other municipalities. He noted this cleaning is recommended by OHA every 3-5 years, but the city's tanks had not been cleaned since 2012.

Motion by Councilor Stratis, seconded by Councilor Bennett to select Potable Divers Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$8,000 and authorize the city administrator to sign. Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Weathers: YES; Murray: YES; Harris: YES; Bennett: YES; Stratis: YES

Other Business

Pop-Up Library Grant

Mr. Baker explained that Peggy had approached him about a Library Services and Technology grant for popup libraries with no matching requirements. The grant would fund mobile shelters to create popup libraries at locations like the Grange, Bridge Academy, and Mountain View Academy. The application was due December 1st.

Mr. Baker noted this was primarily informational as the grant application was within his authority, but he wanted to ensure the Council had no objections due to the staff time that would be required for reporting. The Council expressed consensus support for applying for the grant.

Mr. Baker also mentioned two other grant applications: a CIS safety and security grant for \$5,000 to upgrade security at city hall (including fixing the ADA door and improving security cameras) and a CIS grant for \$5,000 for sewer mainline cleaning, which would help prevent backups and prepare lines for camera work identified in the I&I project.

Mr. Baker brought up a request from the National School Choice Week to illuminate the covered bridge in yellow and red from January 25-31, 2026. Mr. Baker indicated he would check with the school to determine if this was legitimate organization before proceeding.

Mayor Weathers informed the Council about a Marine Board special use permit application from rowers to keep their race course buoys up from December through May. The public comment period was closing on December 5th.

Mr. Baker confirmed that there would be both a work session and regular meeting in December. The work session would include SDC updates if he could get a response from Matt at Civil West. He also reported receiving population updates from PSU estimating the city's population at 1,316 as of July 1, an increase of 10 from the previous year.

Adjourn

Mayor Weathers adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

APPROVED:

Maureen M. Weathers
Maureen M. Weathers, Mayor

ATTEST:

Max Baker
Max Baker, City Recorder