



PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN

June 8, 2023

To: Members of the McMinnville City Council & McMinnville Water & Light Commission

From: Brian Scott & Andrés Mantilla, BDS Planning

Re: Background for City of McMinnville and McMinnville Water & Light Partnership Conversations

BDS Planning has been contracted by the City of McMinnville and McMinnville Water & Light to engage, facilitate, and support the City Council and Water & Light Commission in coming to agreement on a productive partnership framework with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as a strengthened working relationship for the benefit of the people of McMinnville.

To do this, we conducted one-on-one conversations with MW&L Commissioners, City Councilors, the City Manager, and the MW&L General Manager. These conversations focused on the current relationship between the two entities, process outcomes, success, and thoughts on a MW&L Charter amendment.

Our facilitation team will be in McMinnville June 13 and 14 to facilitate three meetings:

1. A session with the McMinnville Water & Light Commission
2. A session with the McMinnville City Council
3. A joint session with both bodies

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

In preparation for those meetings, the following is a recap of those April 2023 one-on-one conversations, summarized as areas of agreement and areas of tension.

- Councilors and Commissioners agree that the relationship between the two bodies is somewhere between strained and broken. Relationships and communication between Councilors and Commissioners were already limited, and this was exacerbated by limited in-person interaction during the pandemic.
- Challenges also exist between two governing bodies when it comes to trust and collaboration.
- Everyone agrees that the roles and responsibilities of each body are unclear.
- The day-to-day working relationships between the staff of the organizations is highly communicative and generally positive.
- Both groups are wary of amending the MW&L charter, largely because they are unfamiliar with it. If amendments were to be considered, members would need to better the charter's current contents and why amendments might be useful.
- Many expressed the need for improved education and mutual understanding of each body and the water and electric utility field.
- Many expressed the need for mutual trust plus open and transparent communication.

- Councilors and Commissioners both referenced shifts in revenue streams (pilot tax, franchise fees, maintaining low rates, etc.) – these require attention and further conversation.
- Both parties want to find a set of principles to best serve the people of McMinnville.

## THIS WEEK'S MEETINGS

As noted above, we will facilitate three meetings this week: one for the Commission, one for the Council, and a joint session for both groups.

At these sessions, we hope to do several things:

1. Share our observations from talking to each of you (without sharing individual comments) and facilitate a discussion the issues in a constructive way.
2. Facilitate internal discussions of each group to agree on what they hope to accomplish during the joint session, including guiding principles for the relationship and specific actions to help the groups work better together.
3. At the joint session, facilitate agreement on draft guiding principles and specific actions.

## NEXT STEPS

Following the meetings this week, we will refine the principles and actions, conduct follow-up individual conversations to review this refined draft, and facilitate a final joint session to reach final agreement.

Thank you for your ongoing participation in this important effort. We look forward to seeing you Tuesday and Wednesday!